



WORKSHOP: TEEN DATING VIOLENCE



THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK FOR FACILITATORS¹

Violence against women is recognized as one of the most widespread social practices, promoted and reproduced within communities, being lived on a daily basis by women, attacking directly their fundamental rights.

Gender violence is related to sexist stereotypes, which can justify the violence of men instead of condemning it, by associating it with masculine attributes based on the predominance of the man over the woman, around which some men build their identity (Lawson et al, 2010; Reitzel-Jaffe & Wolfe, 2001; Stith, Smith, Penn, Ward & Tritt, 2004). This type of violence is often used to maintain the inequality of power between men and women and, therefore, decreases when progress is made in the construction of equality.

It is important to take into consideration that it is called gender violence because it implies hierarchical relationships and inequality, understanding that it is not biological sex that conditions women, but rather it has to do with the way in which culture builds them, with models where women have specific roles, differentiated from those of men.

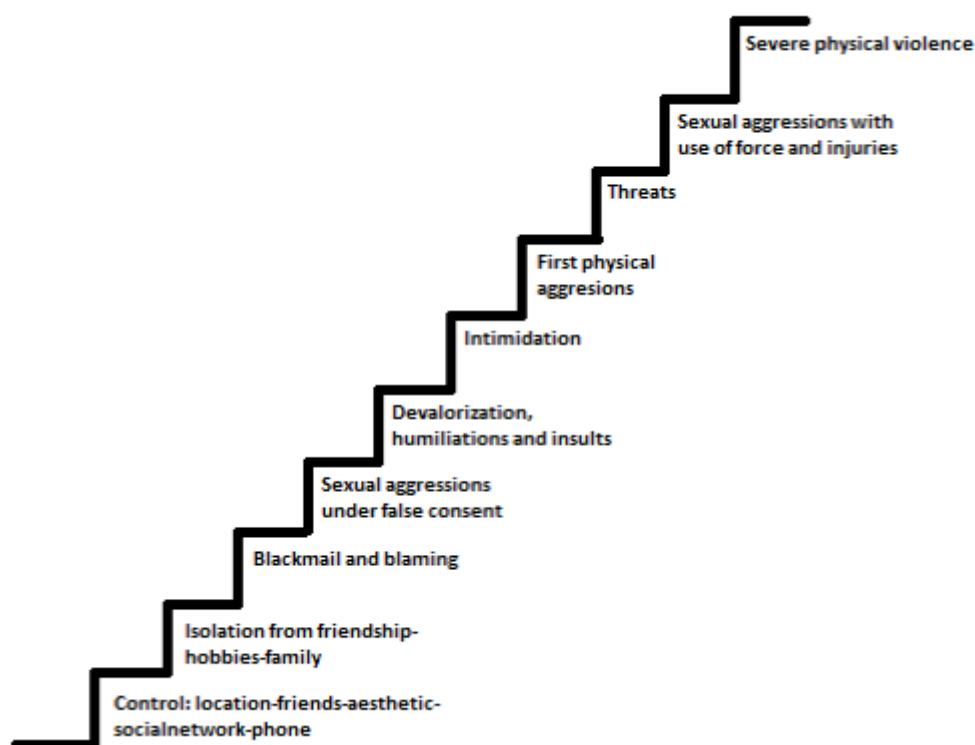
Female roles are always stereotyped. As an example, women are seen or made feel obliged to be passive, tender, submissive, obedient, vulnerable and dedicated to the care of others; while the male role is associated with aggressive, competitive, high degree of demand for success, wisdom, leadership, courage and knowledge. Consequence, in the processes of gender construction and socialization, family is the reference with which the new members are going to identify themselves, as well as their environment and the expectations people have of them and within their communities and societies. Adults will be the ones who influence the identity processes, both of the boy and the girl, as gender patterns are transmitted to them from a very young age.

This is an indication that it is the current society itself that extends the stereotypes of inequality, submission and domination between the sexes, in the words of Barberá and Martínez (2004), "it does so through a sexist education transmitted from the different agencies of socialization". Thus, it is essential to keep young people in mind, since from early ages the manifestations of gender violence will become behavioral patterns, which will become a clear indicator of gender violence in the future adult life (Sánchez, 2016).

¹ The theoretical framework here exposed is an extract of the document *TDV – Theoretical Framework* that can be found in our website: www.love-and-respect.org

According to the results of a qualitative study on gender violence in adolescence developed by Carmen Ruiz Repullo (2016), it was possible to identify that, after the stories provided by the interviewees, it is reflected that gender violence in adolescence is symbolized in a cyclic ladder that everyone rises at different rates.

According to Ruiz, the first steps disguise the violence of "love", where the girl gets used to the mandates of the boy. However, at each time the rise is less diffuse and the violence that suffers becomes more evident. It is a cyclical ladder since in each step the spiral of violence, tension, explosion and repentance takes place. In each of them the girl is required to get used to this certain type of domination in the relationship. As more steps are climbed, more difficult the descent is going to be. However, there is always an exit.



1 Source: Extracted from Ruiz's study (2016)

The social construction of love during the adolescence, through the agents of socialization, especially the media, leads to processes of attraction and choice not exempt from power asymmetries and hegemonic models of being a girl or boy (Gómez, 2004).

The process of attraction is understood as the socially constructed mechanism based on the model of hegemonic desire. It is the process that builds the desirable identities, both

for women and for men. Reinforced by the socialization agents, especially the media, the model of "bad boy" emerges as sexy and the "good boy" as a friend (Gómez, 2004; Amurrio, 2008).

The election process is an individual act, although not exempt from social influence, since generally the chosen models are the ones that society reinforces and considers desirable: "... people we consider attractive and not attractive are internalized through socialization and the interaction with other people, but not only the physical attractiveness, but the behaviors that are attractive and those that are not" (Duque, 2006: 79).

What would be behind the social construction of love in adolescent relationships is the so-called romantic love. In the words of Esteban, Medina and Távora (2005), romantic love: "... is one of the forms of love that involves the presence of sexual desire and that is perceived as singular and distinctive with respect to other forms of love, whether due to the intimacy it produces, the commitment it can remit to or the perceptions it generates".

Some of the reviewed works on romantic love refer to the existence of myths about romantic love and how to live it. By myth we can understand a preconception of ideas that, referred to romantic love, show a kind of "shared truths" that perpetuate the unequal roles and power asymmetries of boys towards girls and that are assumed in courtships as part of the relationship (Ruiz, 2016).

Those are false beliefs that "tend to have a great emotional charge, concentrate many feelings, and often contribute to create and maintain the ideology of the group and, therefore, are often resistant to change and reasoning" (Ferrer et al., 2010). In the realm of romantic love these myths produce shared beliefs about "true love", the true nature of love. However, the existence of myths that support the ideal of romantic love can be considered as a risk factor in adolescent love relationships (Luzón, 2011).

THE WORKSHOP

In this workshop we will use Love&Respect App Quizz.... as a key tool. We will use it's first quiz called "Can you recognize a healthy relationship?" to interact with teenagers, creating debates and listening to their opinions on whether the described conducts belong to a healthy relationship or a toxic one.

Besides our app, this workshop can be carried out creating a *Kahoot* quiz, so it can be more participative.

MATERIALS

- Mobile phone
- App *quiz Love and Respect* or,
- Laptop
- Kahoot²
- Projector

- DIN A2 paper
- Markers, Pens, etc.

AIMS

- Identify the ideas around "romantic love".
- Sensitize about normalization of violent/toxic behaviors in normal life and how this leads to abuse situations in teenagers relationships.

INSTRUCTIONS

Trough the quiz, a number of different dating/relationship situations will appear. Once everyone has read them and voted, a round of comments opens, the moderator asks a series of questions regarding the situation described on the quiz and encourages the debate between the youngsters.

From each situation a phrase or statement should come out as a conclusion of the debate around it. This statement will be written down to the DIN A2 paper in order to create a list of "healthy relationships characteristics". Then, once the list is created, it can be hung at the classroom wall so it can be present all the year.

² In Annex 1 you can find a transcription of Situations and Responses for you to create a Kahoot or to use without technological devices.

Annex 1. Situations and responses.

Situation 1

Sophia and Peter are dating for a while. They are both in love and are often connected via Messenger. Sophie writes to Peter whenever she is not with him. When Peter doesn't reply immediately, Sofie asks what is going on, if he is alright. Sophia thinks this proves that she is interested in him and that she loves him.

Response:

Communication is essential for a healthy relationship. But everyone should have the right to be "offline" sometimes and to have some privacy. Your partner does not have a right to overwhelm you by messages or calls and to constantly demand the information about what you are doing and where you are.

Situation 2

Peter sometimes is in a bad mood. Sophia tries to help him, she listens to him, tries to cheer him up. Once, Sophia needed a time off and went to the cinema with a friend, although Peter had a bad day. After Peter told her: "you do not care how I feel" and "because of you I am now more depressed."

Response:

We all expect our partner will be there for us, that they will take care and support us. But this shouldn't be taken for granted. Everybody is responsible for their own emotions, although it might be sometimes difficult to bear. It isn't fair to expect that your partner will help you out of everything or even to blame them for how you feel.

Situation 3

Sofie often tells Peter things like: "you are my everything" or "without you I am nothing". Sophia feels that it is a prove of her love. However, Peter doesn't feel comfortable about it and he shares that with Sofie. Sofie then stops using such phrases.

Response:

We have all said that sometimes, haven't we? Is it bad then or just romantic? To your partner it might sound as if the rest of your life didn't mean anything, he/she might feel under pressure and also extremely responsible for you. Saying: "I love you", "I like you" or "You are really important to me," might be better ways to express your love. Also, do not forget that you are the most important person in your own life.

Situation 4

Alex, a former classmate of Sofie added her on Facebook. After some chatting, they agreed to meet for a coffee. Peter was jealous at first, but he decided not to tell to Sofie. Afterwards he asked her about the meeting, and she shared some of the things they discussed.

Response:

Sometimes you can feel some insecurities in your relationship. However, controlling and possessive behavior doesn't have place in a relationship. Both you and your partner deserve trust and have a right to have your own friends and spend time with them. Respect each other privacy and talk openly about your feelings.

Situation 5

Peter was spending a lot of time with his best friend Anna. Sofie was very annoyed and told Peter that she is sure that Anna wants to be more than just a friend. He refused that, saying that they are like a brother and sister. Sofie did not believe him and said. "It is either her or me."

Response:

Mistrust and extreme insecurities don't belong to a healthy relationship. Your partner does not have a right to decide who you spend time with and limit your social contacts with friends or family. We have many spheres in our life and love relationship is just one of them.

Situation 6

Sofie was studying very hard and she received a one-year scholarship at a very good school. She wanted to celebrate it with Peter. On the other side, Peter was not doing so well, and he was struggling to pass the exams. However, he decided to celebrate with Sofie and asked her to help him with his studies.

Response:

In a healthy relationship, the partners are happy for each other achievements. Never let insecurity or even envy of your partner's success get between you. It is absolutely ok to ask for help and learn from your partner's strengths. Empathy is very important in a relationship and remember that your partner is in the same team. That way you can enrich each other's lives.

Situation 7

Peter's parents left for the weekend and he invited Sofie to his home, hoping that they will have sex. They watched a movie and then started kissing and cuddling. But Sofie stopped Peter and told him that she doesn't feel ready to have sex. Peter was disappointed but told her it's fine.

Response:

Nobody owes sex and intimacy to their partner, even if they are in a relationship for some time and they love each other. At any situation, it is only your own decision if you want to have sex or not. Your partner needs to respect it, it does not mean that you do not love him. Trying to convince or even pushing is never acceptable. NO means NO at any point in the relationship, even if you said yes before, and silence does not mean yes. Only YES is YES.

Situation 8

Peter decides to surprise Sofie with a dinner that he cooked for her for her birthday. He invited couple of other friends. During the dinner Sofie makes several comments and jokes about the food saying: "Hopefully everyone has a good health insurance, because we might end up in the hospital after eating this."

Response:

Constructive criticism is indeed important, but even that has its time and place. However, this seems more like an intentional embarrassment in front of the friends and hurting the partner's self-esteem. If similar situations occur in your relationship it can be a form of psychological violence. Think twice about how the joke you want to say might make your partner feel.

Situation 9

Sofie is accepted to a very good university which is in a different city. It is her dream came true and Peter is the first person she shares the news with, as she wants to plan how they can sustain their relationship. But instead, Peter asks her to give up this opportunity and stay with him in their hometown.

Response:

In a healthy relationship it is important to support each other's' dreams and discuss the solutions of challenging life situations together. It is not right to decide for somebody

else, what they should do, or even push them into making a decision which they might be regretting later.

Situation 10

After dating for few months Sofie and Alex agree that they are not the best match and they decide to break up. After few weeks Sofie's friends tell her that Peter is telling everyone that he dumped her because "she was too slutty."

Response:

Spreading rumors is never ok, even if one can be upset about the break up! Especially about something so sensitive, like someone's intimate life and sexual reputation. Besides, saying that someone is slutty is never ok, no one can judge you for your sexual life.