

Review Article

Gender, Pain and Pandemic in the 21st Century

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Abstract

The objective of this work was to study the configuration of gender relations from the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, and its relationship with the uncertainty and pain of what was experienced when social scenarios were altered. The analysis of gender relations allowed us to understand what human beings felt and expressed when there are global problems such as a pandemic. The questions sought to be answered are: How were gender relations perceived in private spaces? How did gender relations develop? Why do they cause body pain? The methodology corresponded to the qualitative one; research techniques such as in-depth interviews were applied to both women and men of different gender identities. The findings of this research showed that the performative nature of domestic spaces favored power relations, for example, were found in the responses of the interviewees who stopped doing things they liked to please their children or the family, even if it causes them frustration. The frustration causing irritability, sadness and pain for giving up doing what several of them wanted. The women assumed without saying or giving an opinion about it, sometimes to avoid family conflicts, some and others because they did not feel heard or captured. Thus, both of them felt disconcerted with the relationships that were built with the confinement. Finally, the pandemic has disputed the roles of authority in gender relations, when men as well as women have questioned themselves about their contributions in daily life, mainly, women recognized frustration for the contributions they make and are the ones who receive a lower salary, an overload of work and have developed melancholy, sadness at not being able to change their situation, which translates into bodily pain or physical discomfort. Therefore, some of them have been led to consume medication, alcohol and drugs to overcome the frustration they suffer. Finally, the study of social and individual phenomena can lead to the development of public and institutional policies, as well as information that favors the construction of egalitarian gender relations in daily life.

Keywords: Women, Men, Pain, Pandemic, Health

Introduction

The objective of this work was the study of gender relations from the pandemic in 2020 and 2021, with the uncertainty and pain of what was experienced when social scenarios are altered. This work deals with the individual experiences of a group of men and women. The analysis of such relationships allows us to understand what human beings feel and express when there are global problems such as a pandemic. The patriarchal model that governs Western societies is ancient, which has perpetuated inequality between women and men throughout history. Men have enjoyed social prestige, a fact that gave them credibility in their undertakings [1] from early stages of history. The treatment of women has been abusive, domineering, and discriminatory. The patriarchal system generates illnesses in both men and women of different genders, which express themselves with pain, catastrophism, erotomania and the mythification of successful men; therefore, the confinement showed how gender relations are interwoven in the different dimensions of daily life. The questions sought to be answered are: How are gender relations perceived in private spaces? How did gender relations develop? Why do they cause body pain?

The qualitative methodology was utilized in this investigation and techniques applied were in-depth interviews [2]. In addition to using interviews by electronic means and tracking of

cases of complaints through social networks. Adult women were interviewed, who were asked if they wanted to participate in the non-profit research. The stories collected were from women who did domestic work, in addition to their professional activity as teachers, architects, engineers and accountants. All of them recognized that from isolation they developed feelings of sadness, melancholy, fear, and anger, as well as guilt in some cases; catastrophic ideas also arose accompanied by bodily pain. The interviews were applied by electronic means, and some in direct interview with due distance. In this way, it was shown that most of them have developed different manifestations of non-localized body pain, but felt as a physical and emotional discomfort; likewise, anxiety and catastrophic ideas were displayed.

Changes in Gender Relations

Accepting changes in moods as in daily interactions was difficult, because various discomforts could not be explained by women and men. Above all, for some women it was difficult to admit that throughout their lives they had experienced verbal violence and other times physical violence by their family and once they were adults by their partner.

The confinement caused what is done daily to be missed. During the pandemic, some tasks were reversed. For example, some men

made purchases to stock the pantry. While they were away from home, the men could talk with friends with a feeling of freedom, but not the women who are mothers and had to be guiding their children during classes by electronic means without leaving home.

Accepting what bothered women or made them uncomfortable, made them feel “bad woman”, several of them recognized that before confinement, leaving home while going to work, school or shopping distracted them from their daily activities; however, with the pandemic, these spaces in solitude were no longer possible for some.

Realizing that the violence was accentuating in their lives caused several of them to fear for not being able to avoid what they felt and to recognize the tolerance towards the greater abuse of power by the couple, in addition to catastrophic ideas such as thinking that they were going to sick and contagious, a fact that in several of them and also the men, altered their moods and began to suffer body pain with a feeling of melancholy and sadness.

The pandemic led to the recognition of two important spaces for both men and women: the intimate space such as the house or home, and the workspace. In each one of them, emotions and feelings were experienced that led them to fear for the care of the home and, on the other hand, to keep their job. Although several of them recognized that they suffered different types of violence in both spaces.

In the house or home, the aggressions derived mainly from not covering the economic and social demands that were made of them. In this way, isolation exacerbated the idea of inability to solve problems, as well as a feeling of loneliness.

The loneliness experienced not only because of the isolation or the pandemic, but also because of what they were suffering, such as the recognition of their economic and emotional dependence, poverty, discrimination at work, which led them to suffer emotionally. Several women endured physical and verbal violence from their partners, sons and daughters, mainly adolescents, as well as family members who were in her care. In addition, they recognized that violence was not a new phenomenon in their personal lives, but that they had endured it since childhood. The home was not the safest place to shelter either, but the most demanding to fulfill a series of tasks, which, if not fulfilled, increased violence.

The men felt persecuted when being observed in daily life because they had the tendency to always be in communication with their jobs, they had the possibility of being absent when arguing some excuse for their employment, not so the women who felt limited by the assumed responsibilities. Thus, several couples came into conflict when the infidelities came to light when they realized the messages through electronic media.

The set of these emotions made several women think that they were entering severe depression and anxiety. Several of them were considered to have some mental illness. The reactions were diverse.

The other important space in which the violence took place was in the workplace, although several of them worked with some platform, they also felt relegated several times by their superiors. Loneliness, domestic violence, the recognition of working in a place with high

levels of violence, in addition to salary reduction, or dismissal, favored irritability, therefore, they looked at life in a catastrophic way, which It manifested itself with the sensation of bodily pain, irritability and anxiety.

Not all women and men could remain sheltered because they had to work, and not all jobs considered the tasks to be carried out, so some could stay at home and others had to attend their work and risk getting infected. The attitudes of the bosses were diverse, the preferences for one and the other emerged, as well as the contradictions in the relationships, thus, reports were found that several women went to the office to work because they did not have children, or to take care of. Personal lives were also invaded. Social relationships can be explained from intersectionality, that is, how these ways of being, feeling and thinking are present in the subjectivity of humans.

The term intersectionality is part of the experience of black women, who emphasize how the different systems of inequality and domination intersect, not only is it enough to mention the oppressions of sexism, but also the set of emotions that emanate from them, such as the women's irritability for being mothers, or for not being able to change their reality; on the other hand, it is necessary to mention the alterations of men. It is always believed that women at a certain age are more likely to suffer from mental illnesses, however, they also present a set of ailments little mentioned in academic research.

It is important to investigate the voyeuristic aspect that men developed with the pandemic and the consumption of images of women in erotic positions, as well as erotomania or the delusion of being loved, when men persecute women because they believe that one wants to establish a love relationship. Complaints against women as wives for their physical appearance due to being fat, ugly, old were also accentuated, according to what the interviewees referred to, thus unleashing pictures of domestic violence.

It is not necessarily about considering irritable moods as a pathology when the contexts show that a set of situations was being suffered that could not be controlled with personal desires, therefore, it must be understood that they are not necessarily chronic mental illnesses or rather, human reactions to uncertainty and disappointments about their lives, such as existing in a patriarchal system where cruelty can be present in everyday life, because it is learned [3], because for some men or women it is believed that with insults, aggression or any form of violence it is formative and only in this way is it possible to understand what is experienced.

The Transformation of Spaces with the Pandemic

Intimate spaces such as the home, work environments, and public spaces have been transformed by the pandemic. The transformation of virtual work environments helped the workplace to be the home. The children also stayed at home and established their school from a distance through electronic means. The house became the refuge and at the same time the spaces to stay working, studying and with a family life that seemed to protect the health of each of its members. However, statistics showed that domestic violence had increased worldwide and not only in poor countries [4].

The transformation of domestic environments was not necessarily protective for its members, it showed the intolerance and abuse of power of each of the family members, which brought with it domestic violence, which is that which is exercised by the couple and is the most common form in women's lives, much more than assaults or rapes perpetrated by strangers or simple acquaintances [5]. In a study developed by the WHO (World Health Organization) in 2005, it was shown that this violence has repercussions on women's health and is therefore a public health problem. In this way we can observe that on some occasions during the isolation the relationships within the house became violent and this violence was directed mainly towards women and girls.

The performative nature of domestic spaces favored the exacerbation of power relations at very low levels, for example, some women changed their entertainment habits with the use of television such as soap operas because the husband watched his television programs at that time and he didn't want anyone to interrupt him; the teenage son liked to listen to music from the early hours of the morning with a very high volume; the teenage daughter wanted the boyfriend to stay home all afternoon until late at night. The women assumed without saying or giving an opinion about it. They could not complain to their sons and daughters because they immediately received verbal and even physical aggression.

Domestic Violence

The data revealed that domestic violence, understood as that which takes place within private spaces and is directed mainly towards women, increased. Women of different ages are the recipients of such violence, but especially those who manage money, the house and take care of others, both plants and pets. Almost all women within a family unit tend to suffer some type of violence, which falls on those who are the administrators, those who ration household products so that food is enough for each one of the members of the family unit. They are those who seek to maintain the harmony of the home without receiving a payment for it and do not feel satisfied either, but rather misunderstood, because they do not understand why the other members of the family do not understand them.

These models of women have been affected by contingency in dealing with loneliness and vulnerability. They were workers and employees, fired from their jobs due to the health crisis. Some other women said they did not have the same income for working independently, doing work as temporary employees.

Among the consequences that have been analyzed in this work are the alterations in interpersonal relationships that have become tense due to economic deprivation that leads to dissatisfaction of tastes and needs such as food, games, entertainment such as video games, which are important part of the distraction of young people within the home. By not satisfying these desires, the sons become violent towards the women. However, there are other women who have a job at home who have enough spaces for a comfortable life and who also suffered from catastrophism and bodily pain, which led us to think that the chances of suffering from some emotional disturbance could be developed by the violence experienced from their ideals built from childhood [6].

Other women presented feelings of guilt for finding themselves in attractive places such as a beach house, with all their problems solved; but with anxiety for not being able to leave their homes and do daily activities. The catastrophic ideas diminished when they started donating to social institutions or patronizing their workers or other people. The catastrophic feeling disappeared momentarily and gave them a certain satisfaction in their ways of acting. However, the pain did not disappear because it is felt and reflected in the body, this is due to the set of substances generated by the human body itself and the inflammation in the nerve terminals that alter the autonomic nervous system [7-32]. Isolation led several women to question their personal lives, which evidenced the fear of death and a set of dissatisfactions that they could not say due to the possibility of having conflicts with their partner or family.

The loneliness and feelings that women manifest was often experienced in private, without telling others how they felt because it led them to feel like bad women or transgressors of the models of being "good mothers" "good wives". This situation most of the time led them to altered states due to the impotence of solving immediate problems.

The impossibility of solving problems many times turned them into irritable women, who yelled at, humiliated and abused others to express their impotence for not being able to resolve family demands as they used to. This is a form of violence made visible for some when they realized that several of them were bearing great responsibilities, but they did not recognize them since the departures or absences of the children or the husband at home made it easier for them to be distracted in other activities. The time spent at home while the children and the husband were away from home allowed women to distract themselves in the kitchen, in domestic work, or in work outside the home.

The consequences of violence against women are sometimes channeled towards others through small children, adolescents, older adults who are under their care. Faced with the impossibility of solving problems, most of them become absent, distracted, with little desire to talk and irritable, they almost always get caught up in interpersonal discussions that lead them to see a catastrophic scenario, thinking that things will get worse and they will not be resolved. Above all, in the economic aspect in which women often solve economic problems without consulting others.

The house is always thought of as a safe place for all members of a family (Buthler, 2019), but other appreciations regarding the home are neglected, such as, for example, it is the place where the most original patriarchal orders are reproduced, such as gender mandates accompanied by authoritarianism with shouts, inflexible orders, cruelty when speaking by men and sons, sometimes daughters also impose their mandates of authority.

The combination of time and work led women to inertia about the accepted normality of their lives, but verbal and physical violence made them reconsider the desire to remain with the lifestyle they were leading or wonder if it was a norm social or gender mandates that guided their behavior. Several of them recognized that their partners

hindered them to carry out their life projects. They realized this when their spaces were invaded, then, the model of being women caregivers, administrators and doing everything possible to meet family needs led them to a catastrophic situation, realizing that the pandemic would not end overnight.

Final Considerations

Finally, catastrophism and pain play a fundamental role in this historical moment due to the pandemic, accompanied by fears due to not only economic, social, and labor uncertainty, but also due to interpersonal relationships that have been transformed by interacting in small spaces, that have acquired other functions: as a school or a workplace.

Catastrophism, with its manifestation of pain and confinement, become more acute when work is uncertain, the economic situation is precarious, and when many women have realized what they have contributed to their work at home and have received violence, indifference of the couple, mistreatment of children and even family members they care for. The care and tasks performed within the home are not considered as work, but as a set of obligations and commitments that must be fulfilled if they are women who have assumed a life as a couple with children and take care of each of them. The patriarchal system and the pandemic favor this catastrophism and the pain felt, manifest, not imagined, which is based on uncertainty. Work as a rare phenomenon and in other cases decadent; favor the triggering of pain pictures that cannot be explained only from a medical and psychological discipline, also from an analysis of culture and the way of meaning life.

The experiences recorded by the interviewees are closely associated with suffering, which not only corresponds to the moment of exploring an experience of aggression for more than six months in the workplace, but also these aggressions activate memories or experiences recorded in their childhood, in youth, in married life and in working life. All this contributes to the development of alterations in gender relations and social relations. The significance of work plays an important role for these women, because it not only nurtures self-esteem and identity, but also carries many illusions seeking attempts at autonomy and the desire to generate changes in personal lives and in work environments. Those ideals are shattered when faced with processes of prolonged aggression in the workplace. Once these are broken, women usually manifest bodily pain and a set of physical manifestations, mostly apparently psychosomatic, that even they themselves are sometimes unable to explain or define.

With this research, it has been possible to distinguish that the processes of prolonged suffering generate physical and emotional alterations, which are expressed with generalized bodily pain and that generate changes in all the contexts in which women operate. Culture plays an important role in how women and men can give meaning to their experience. In addition, it has been found that the meaning given to the different forms of violence and abuse in the workplace or at home has multiple and complex implications for the person who experiences or suffers it. For this reason, it is important that through scientific research it is shown that violent forms of coexistence can be modified when gender relations become affable and allow interaction without violence in daily life.

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