



Daphne III Programme: Youth4Youth: Empowering Young People in Preventing Gender-based Violence through Peer Education

Attitudes on Gender Stereotypes and Gender-based Violence among Youth

Country report: Italy

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1. Introduction

The phenomenon of violence. Several research studies (UNICEF 2000, 2006) showed a considerable incidence of violence against women all around the world. In particular, data point out that domestic violence is the most common form of abuse committed against women (UNICEF, 2006). Moreover, the data our association has received underestimate this phenomenon: we can guess its range, but violence remains largely hidden.

Consequently, both UNICEF (2006) and WHO (2005) assert how important it is to shine a light on domestic violence globally and treat it as a major public health issue. On this basis, World Health Organization (2005) raised an alert about the enormous toll physical and sexual violence perpetrated by husbands and male partners has on the health and well-being of women.

Italian context: Report of Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat). In 2007 ISTAT presented results from a survey, fully dedicated, for the first time, to physical and sexual violence against women. The sample includes 25 thousand women aged between 16 and 70, telephone interviewed, throughout the country, from January to October 2006.

Thanks to this survey ISTAT could estimate in Italy almost 7 million women as victims of physical or sexual violence during their lifetime (32% of women in the considered age group). The 24% of women were victims of sexual violence, 19% were victims of physical violence acts, 5% were victims of rapes or attempted rapes. 19% women were stalked by partners at the moment of separation or after they split up and were particularly frightened by this. In the last 12 months, 5% of women were victims of violence. The highest rates are observed among young women between 16 and 24.

7% of women were victims of sexual violence before they were 16. Sexual violence cases reported as very serious are, for the most part, linked with the close relatives: father, brothers, family friends, grandfathers, uncles, religious persons. Silence has been the most frequent answer: 53% of women declared they kept silence about the event.

The most present form of violence is psychological. More than 7 million women were or are victims of psychological violence. The most widespread forms are: isolation and attempted isolation, control, financial violence and berating followed by intimidations.

In almost all cases, violence is not reported to the police. The hidden part of violence is very big and it reaches 96% of violent acts by non-partners and 93% by partners. Even in the case of rapes almost all of them (92%) are not reported to the police.

Only 18% of women victims of physical or sexual violence within their own family, consider the suffered violence as a crime. 44% of them considers it as something wrong and 36% considers it as simply a fact that occurred.

From 2005 Casa delle donne per non subire violenza collects data from Italian newspapers about women who were murdered by men. What is highlighted is that more than 100 women are murdered by men every year in Italy: 84 during 2005, 101 in 2006, 107 in 2007, 113 in 2008, 119 in 2009, 127 in 2010. These are very warning and growing numbers. Most of men had a relationship with the woman they have killed.

Youth and violence in intimate relationship. Research studies so far did not pay much attention as to whether and to what degree violence in intimate relationship is a phenomenon that happens among teenage adolescent relationships as well as what attitudes young people have

regarding gender stereotypes and gender based violence. Most of the studies focused on adult population despite the sociological data showing alarming levels of violence in intimate relationships even related to young people (Gallopini, Leigh, 2009). The studies related to young people focus on consequences from being victims of witnessed violence (Sullivan et al., 2007), while the few studies on factors that may encourage violent behaviors from young people find the causes of youth triggers only within the psychopathology (eg depression or antisocial personality behaviours, Andrews et al., 2000; Kim, Capaldi, 2004, Holtzworth-Munroe, 2000).

There are two important research studies implemented in Italy aiming to explore this issue (Università degli studi di Parma, Provincia di Parma e AUSL di Parma (2009); CREL Studi Ricerche e Formazione e Regione del Veneto, 2011). The first research study involved about 873 students from high schools and first year of University (from 14 to 23 years old) in the territory of Parma. This study demonstrates that young people are able to distinguish different types of violence, to describe the characteristics of victims and perpetrators and to discuss about the psychological consequences for the victims of violence. However, 99% of the participants declared to have been pushed, shaken or to have been verbally abused in an intimate relationship. Since these actions related to sporadic incidents, young people provided excuses for them, especially when they could attribute them to jealousy. The boys and the youngest participants expressed a traditional/conservative view of the intimate relationship between a man and a woman.

The second research study involved 1587 students (from 14 to 21 years old) frequenting different high schools in Veneto region. The areas explored were the same as in the above research study and the results obtained recall the Parma scenery.

Aims

This report presents the results of a study developed in Italy during 2011, within the framework of the Daphne III project “Youth4Youth: Empowering young people in preventing gender-based violence through peer education”. The aims of this survey were to investigate and explore young people’s attitudes towards gender-based violence (GBV) and the links between gender-stereotypes and GBV through qualitative and quantitative research. Additionally, it aims to expose and challenge attitudes of tolerance towards gender-based violence among young people.

2. Methodology

The research consisted of a first stage with a questionnaire reporting on quantitative data, and then a second stage with qualitative focus groups with secondary school students.

2.1 Questionnaire Study

Schools. The questionnaire was administered in 4 different high schools and 1 two-years professional school in Bologna city and province. These schools represented most of the types of high school provided by the Italian education system. These schools were selected through the contacts the association *Casa delle Donne per non subire violenza* had already developed due to previous projects conducted with students frequenting the high schools of Bologna city and province.

The first school named Leonardo da Vinci offers three different courses (scientific, linguistic and social science), the second school, named Luigi Galvani offers education in classical studies, the third school named Aldini Valeriani offers two different courses (technical education and professional education) and the fourth school named Enrico Fermi offers science education. The two-year professional school named ENAIP offers professional courses of 2 years in different

specializations such as electrical civil and industrial plants installation, administration and secretarial studies, informatics and hydrothermal plants installation.

Participants. The total number of the students to whom the questionnaire was administered were 490, of which 265 (54%) were girls and 225 (46%) were boys. There were 126 students from the first school (23 from a scientific class, 81 from four social science classes and 22 from a linguistic class), 134 from the second school, 70 from the third school (18 from a chemistry class, 29 from two social and health operators classes and 23 from an electronics class), 96 from the fourth school and 64 from the two-years professional school. The mean age of the students participating in the questionnaire study is 16.53 years old and the ages most frequent are 16 (157) and 17 (168) years old. The questionnaire was administered also to the students of 18 years old (75) and 14 years old (11) because they were classmates of students of 15 and 17 years old and older of only few months. There were also 11 students of the age of 19 years old and most of them were from the two-year professional school. The majority of the participants, 77%, lived in urban areas.

Measures. A self-report questionnaire was compiled by the research team, in order to investigate attitudes toward gender stereotypes among the students, attitudes toward violence, justifications or explanations endorsed for violence, and myths/knowledge regarding relationship violence. Specifically, attitudes toward gender were assessed using an adapted version of the Attitudes Toward Women Scale for Adolescents (AWSA, Galambos et al., 1985). The questionnaire consists of 12 statements, where respondents rate agreement using a four point Likert scale. For the purposes of this study, four additional statements were added by the researchers in this scale. Attitudes toward violence were assessed using a series of 22 statements compiled by the research team, describing different types of behaviours by boys or girls in a

relationship. Participants were asked to indicate whether they thought each behaviour could be ok “always”, “often”, “sometimes”, or “never” (four point scale). Next, participants were asked to rate how frequently they believed 22 listed “reasons” explaining why men may be violent toward women applied. Participants’ knowledge or misconceptions regarding gender based violence was assessed through a scale asking participants to indicate agreement (using a four point scale ranging from Completely Agree to Completely Disagree), with 19 statements of “myths”. These statements were compiled by the researchers based on previous qualitative studies with the target population and on the international literature regarding common myths or misconceptions about violence. Instruments were adapted into Italian, using the method of front and back translation from social science researchers graduated in English language. All questionnaires had adequate internal reliability indices for our sample. A final set of questions collected demographic and relationship information from participants. To ensure that wording was clear and appropriate for the target age group, the questionnaire was first administered to three volunteers on a pilot basis, and adjustments were made following feedback.

Procedure. The schools were contacted through teachers who collaborated in the past with *Casa delle Donne per non subire violenza*. The time requested to have the approval to proceed with the administration of the questionnaires differed from school to school as it depended on the moment the institute council union was held. Once the approval was obtained the teachers delivered the information leaflet and consensus form to be signed by the parents so that the administration of the questionnaire could begin. No questionnaires were administered without receiving back the consent signed and the adult students were exempted from the consensus form. Sessions for questionnaire administration were scheduled following coordination with teachers-in-charge, and were administered in-class time, in the presence of

trained researcher, who clarified any student queries regarding the questionnaire. The administration of the questionnaire was preceded by the presentation of the researcher from the association *Casa delle Donne per non subire violenza*, of the research project, and of the importance of participating and answering to all the questions of the questionnaire. Teachers were usually present during the administration of the questionnaire. All questionnaires were completed in Italian, and the time requested for filling the questionnaire was 15 to 20 minutes.

After the completion of the questionnaires, students were given a debriefing form that provided contact information (telephone number, website, and emails) for all the relevant bodies engaged in prevention and handling of violence in Bologna.

The researcher did not encounter specific difficulties administering the questionnaire. The most frequent questions made by the students related to giving two answers instead of one as indicated in the guidelines for each question or not knowing how to respond as the response for them depended on the specific situation. Choosing an answer between the mentioned alternatives would have been arbitrary for them. This difficulty was met especially in the Explanations for Violence Scale and the Knowledge/Myths Scale.

Other difficulties and requests for more clarification related to the reasons why men are violent toward women, and what the researchers meant with the term 'romantic relationship'. In the latter case different students tended to not consider romantic relationship a relationship without sexual encounter while others had difficulties deciding the number of the relationships they had been involved in the past two years answering "I don't know" or "A lot". In these cases the cell in the database were left blank. One other difficulty of the participants was having clear definitions of what a town and a village are. As in Italy there are cities, towns, and other urban conglomerates that are not villages it was decided to recode the answers of the participants

considering towns all the conglomerates of more than 15000 inhabitants or those conglomerates that have obtained by law the status of town.

The students showed interest in the research and the results that may come out from the final statistical analysis. Different students showed their interest and willingness to participate in the workshops that will be held during the second part of the project.

2.2 Focus group

The focus group involved a group of 8 students composed of 4 males and 4 females. They were attending 3 schools (one offering education in classical studies, one offering education in science and the last offering education in social science) that were not included in the questionnaire administration phase. These students were recruited through snowball procedure and had an age range of 15-17 years old. As for the questionnaire administration the students participated in the focus group session only after presenting the consensus form signed by one of their parents.

The session was conducted by one moderator that began the session introducing herself, the association and the project before explaining briefly the main objective of the focus group. The moderator ensured the participants on the anonymity and confidentiality of the answers, reminded them that there would be no right or wrong answers but only their opinion on the topics and explained the importance of the digital recording of the whole session.

The moderator conducted the session following a topic guide that the partner organisations prepared for this phase of the project. The main topics investigated were: the definition of violence in relationships; evaluation of awareness and knowledge on the types, the causes, and the consequences of violence on the victims, and on the perpetrators; discussion of quantitative

study findings. The whole session lasted 1 hour and 15 minutes and was digitally recorded and transcribed by one of the researchers collaborating in the project.

3. Results

3.1 Questionnaire study

Descriptive data on the sample. The questionnaire was administered to 490 students of which 265 (54%) were girls and 225 (46%) were boys. The mean age of the students was 16.53 (s.d.= 1.05 range 14-19), the median and mode both were 17.

Three hundred and seventy-seven (77%) of the students were living in an urban area at the moment of the interview while 112 (23%) were living in a rural area. These data is not surprising as the questionnaire was administered in 5 schools located in Bologna which is the regional capital chief town in the Emilia Romagna Region.

Most of the students, a number of 400 (82%) have already had a romantic relationship while only 86 (18%) have never had any romantic relationship; 4 of the participants did not respond to this question. The mean number of the romantic relationships was 2.71 (s.d.=2.56 range 0-20), the median was 2 and the mode 1. Regarding the actual romantic relationship, 190 students (39%) had one while 206 (42%) had no relationship at the moment of the administration of the questionnaire; 94 (19%) did not respond to this question. Of those having a romantic relationship, 28 (15%) just started going out, 54 (29%) were in a relationship for 1 to 5 months, 42 (22%) were in a relationship from 6 to 12 months, 43 (23%) were in a relationship from 13 months to 2 years and 20 (11%) were in a relationship for over 2 years; 3 students did not respond to this question.

The reliability of the scales administered. Since most of the scales administered were compiled or adapted by the researchers for the purposes of the present study, it was considered necessary to examine their reliability and structure (see Table 1).

After the internal consistency was obtained each scale was subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis in order to obtain meaningful and reliable factors for data reduction purposes. No factor analysis was done for the AWSA scale, since the original authors (Golombok et al., 1985) do not propose any subscales or factors, but use the scale to yield a total score. In case of the ATV (Attitudes Toward Violence scale), the first factor analysis yielded seven factors. Considering that three factors seemed unstable as composed by only two items and looking at the communalities and the factor loadings for every item and at the scree plot it was decided to re-conduct the factor analysis fixing the number of factors at four. The four composite variables (shouting, controlling, offending and hitting, pressure into sex) obtained by these four significant factors were then examined separately to see whether there was any gender difference between the different forms of violence. There were two items excluded in the second factor analysis (items 7 “It is ok to threaten to leave a partner in order to achieve something you want” and 22 “Threatening to hit a partner is ok as long as you don’t actually hit him/her”) as they had low communalities (.21 and .28 respectively) and factor loadings (.32 and .36 respectively). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .67 in both factor analysis and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant at the $<.001$ level. The factor analysis yielded interesting results also in case of the Explanations of Violence Scale. The result of this analysis was the division of the scale in four composite variables (men’s nature, pathological causes, gender expectancies, women’s responsibility) that were then examined separately to seek any gender difference between the various groups of explanations of violence. Considering the

communalities, the factor loadings and the conceptual organization of each factor one item (item 8 “they are under stress”) was deleted from the original scale. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy was .89 and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant at the <.001 level. No significant result was obtained in case of KM (Knowledge/Myths About Violence Scale) and as no reliable factors emerged, a single scale score was used.

The internal reliability analysis for each factor emerged was conducted (see Table 1).

Table 1. Internal Reliabilities (Cronbach alphas) for Scales and Factors derived from factor analysis.

Scale	Scale/Factor Items	Cronbach alpha ^a
<i>Attitudes toward Violence</i>		.75
Factor 1: Shouting	ATV15, ATV17, ATV18, ATV19	.82
Factor 2: Controlling	ATV6, ATV9, ATV11, ATV12, ATV13, ATV21	.73
Factor 3: Offending and hitting	ATV2, ATV 4, ATV5, ATV10, ATV14, ATV16, ATV20	.60
Factor 4: Pressure into sex	ATV1, ATV3, ATV8	.68
Excluded items	ATV7, ATV22	
<i>Explanations for Violence</i>		.86
Factor 1: Men’s nature	REASONS2, REASONS3, REASONS6, REASONS7, REASONS10, REASONS14, REASONS15, REASONS20, REASONS12	.86
Factor 2: Pathological causes	REASONS1, REASONS9, REASONS11, REASONS13	.62
Factor 3: Gender expectancies	REASONS16, REASONS 17, REASONS18, REASONS19	.63
Factor 4: Women’s responsibility	REASONS4, REASONS5	.51
Excluded items	REASONS8	
<i>Attitudes Toward Women Scale for Adolescents (AWSA)</i>	AWSA1-AWSA16	.75
<i>Knowledge/Myths about Violence</i>	KM1-KM19	.66

Notes. ^a internal reliability criterion set at $\alpha = .60$; although the criterion was not met for Explanations for Violence, Factor 4, the factor was considered conceptually useful for subsequent analyses.

The descriptive analysis of the scales and the analysis of variance between boys and girls. The statistical analysis of the information obtained through the administration of the four scales demonstrated above, begun with a comparison between the descriptive data and the results which emerged from the analysis of variance.

The descriptive data on the AWSA showed that in the total sample the item receiving the highest agreement is item 13 while the one receiving the lowest agreement is item 4. This trend of the items receiving the highest and the lowest agreement is maintained also in the two groups of girls

and boys (see Table 2). The items that have obtained the highest mean in the boys group are 13, 14, 1, 2, 10, while the items that have obtained the highest mean in the girls group are 13, 14, 2, 1, 3.

Table 2 Items receiving the highest and the lowest agreement in AWSA

Statement/Explanation	Overall		Boys		Girls	
	<i>M (S.D.)</i>	<i>“agree – strongly agree” % (N)*</i>	<i>M (S.D.)</i>	<i>“agree – strongly agree” % (N)*</i>	<i>M (S.D.)</i>	<i>“agree – strongly agree” % (N)*</i>
13. Most girls like to show off their bodies	2.74 (.72)	68 (333)	2.84 (.74)	71 (158)	2.65 (.70)	66 (175)
14. Most boys like to go out with girls just for sex	2.63 (.76)	56 (273)	2.61 (.77)	57 (129)	2.64 (.75)	54 (144)
2. On a date, the boy should be expected to pay all expenses	2.53 (.79)	49 (240)	2.57 (.72)	56 (125)	2.49 (.84)	43 (115)
1. Swearing is worse for a girl than for a boy	2.50 (.80)	54 (262)	2.60 (.79)	56 (126)	2.42 (.80)	51 (136)
3. On the average, girls are not as smart as boys	2.21 (.85)	36 (175)	2.17 (.70)	28 (63)	2.25 (.97)	42 (112)
10. Boys are better leaders than girls	1.92 (.87)	23 (114)	2.39 (.87)	43 (96)	1.53 (.63)	7 (18)
4. More encouragement in a family should be given to sons than daughters to go to college.	1.35 (.63)	6 (30)	1.46 (.67)	7 (16)	1.25 (.57)	5 (14)
Total	1.94 (.35)	490	2.08 (.33)	225	1.82 (.31)	265

Notes. Min=1 (never agree), max = 4 (always agree). * Included also the double responses “disagree – agree”

The means obtained by the girls in almost all the items are lower than the means obtained by the boys except for item 3, item 7 and item 14. This result was confirmed also by the analysis of variance obtained through Multiple Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) ($F(1, 488) = 84.95$ $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .15$) that produced a mean score of 2.08 for boys and a mean score of 1.82 for girls. Basing on these data it is possible to sustain that boys tended to have more conservative attitudes than girls.

The descriptive data on the ATV showed that in the total sample the item receiving the highest agreement is item 15 while the one receiving the lowest agreement is item 20. In the girls group the item receiving the highest agreement is item 15 while the two receiving the lowest agreement are item 14 and 20, both having the same mean (1.03). In the boys group the item receiving the highest agreement is item 1 while the item receiving the lowest agreement is item 20. Even though the total mean score obtained by the girls is lower than the one obtained by the boys the item receiving the highest agreement in the girls group has a mean score higher than the item receiving the highest mean score in the boys group (see Table 3).

The items that have obtained the highest mean in the boys group are 1, 12, 3, 18, 21, while the items that have obtained the highest mean in the girls group are 15, 9, 18, 19, 17.

Table 3 Items receiving the highest and the lowest agreement in ATV

Statement/Explanation	Overall		Boys		Girls	
	<i>M (S.D.)</i>	<i>“sometim es-often- always ok” % (N)*</i>	<i>M (S.D.)</i>	<i>“sometim es-often- always ok” % (N)*</i>	<i>M (S.D.)</i>	<i>“sometim es-often- always ok” % (N)*</i>
15. It is ok for girl to shout at her boyfriend if he is constantly nagging/arguing	2.03 (.70)	81 (396)	1.88 (.63)	75 (167)	2.16 (.72)	86 (229)
18. It is ok for a girl to shout at her boyfriend if he is not treating her with respect	1.98 (.67)	79 (382)	1.93 (.66)	76 (170)	2.02 (.68)	81 (212)
9. It is ok for a girl to set limits to where her boyfriend goes	1.95 (.82)	70 (341)	1.79 (.78)	61 (136)	2.08 (.82)	77 (205)
12. It is ok for a boy to set limits on how his girlfriend dresses	1.88 (.71)	71 (350)	2.04 (.80)	75 (169)	1.76 (.59)	68 (181)
1. It is ok for a boy to push a girl into having sex if they have been dating	1.87 (.80)	64 (313)	2.12 (.84)	75 (169)	1.67 (.69)	55 (144)
21. It is ok for a boy to set limits to where his girlfriend goes	1.85 (.73)	67 (326)	1.89 (.76)	69 (153)	1.81 (.70)	66 (173)
17. It is ok for a boy to shout at his girlfriend if she is not treating him with respect.	1.83 (.65)	70 (342)	1.82 (.64)	70 (158)	1.83 (.66)	69 (184)
19. It is ok for boy to shout at his girlfriend if she is constantly nagging/arguing	1.80 (.65)	68 (331)	1.77 (.66)	66 (147)	1.83 (.65)	70 (184)

3. It is ok for a boy to push a girl into having sex if she has been flirting with him all night	1.67 (.80)	49 (240)	1.98 (.88)	67 (151)	1.40 (.63)	34 (89)
20. It is ok for a boy to hit his girlfriend if she is constantly nagging/arguing	1.03 (.20)	3 (15)	1.04 (.25)	4 (8)	1.03 (.16)	3 (7)
Total	1.53 (.25)	490	1.56 (.25)	225	1.50 (.25)	265

Notes. Min=1 (never ok), max = 4 (always ok). * Included also the double responses “never ok – sometimes ok”

The means obtained by the girls in 13 items are lower than the means obtained by the boys. In contrast with the first scale, the disparity between the girls’ responses and the boys’ responses is not so obvious. The small but significant difference between boys’ responses and girls’ responses was confirmed also by the analysis of variance obtained through Multiple Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) ($F(1, 488) = 6.57, p < .05, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .02$) that produced a mean score of 1.56 for boys and a mean score of 1.50 for girls. Based on these data it is possible to sustain that boys tended to show higher tolerance of violence than girls even though sex explains only a small portion of the variability of the responses given by the two groups.

As there are two sets of statements, one involving violence exercised by a boy toward a girl and another one involving violence exercised by a girl towards a boy, the T-Test for independent samples was conducted in order to compare the mean scores of boys and girls in these sets. The mean scores (1.52 for boys and 1.43 for girls) obtained in the 9 items on the violence exerted by boys differed significantly between the two gender groups ($t(488) = 3.74, p < .001$). This trend was reversed in the case of the 8 items on the violence exerted by girls ($t(488) = -3.11, p < .01$), with girls obtaining a total mean score of 1.67 and boys a total mean score of 1.57. T-Test on the responses of the whole sample on the items composing these two sets yielded significant difference between the means (1.47 for violence exerted by boys and 1.63 for violence exerted by girls) obtained for the two forms of violence ($t(489) = -10.56, p < .001$).

These results obtained by the T-Tests tell that violence was more tolerated when exerted by girls rather than by boys.

T-Test on the four composite variables (shouting, controlling, offending and hitting, pressure into sex) by sex yielded significant differences in three cases: shouting ($t(488) = -2.29$ $p < .05$) with girls (1.96) obtaining higher mean score than boys (1.85); offending and hitting ($t(435.96) = 2.23$ $p < .05$) with boys (1.20) obtaining higher mean score than girls (1.15); pressure into sex ($t(359.44) = 8.57$ $p < .001$) with boys (1.80) obtaining higher mean score than girls (1.37).

An analysis of variance for repeated measures was conducted in order to seek possible differences between the four composite variables describing different forms of violence. This analysis yielded significant results with shouting obtaining the highest agreement ($M = 1.91$), followed by controlling ($M = 1.74$), by pressure into sex ($M = 1.57$) and by offending and hitting ($M = 1.17$). Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated ($X^2(5) = 161.78$ $p < .001$) therefore degrees of freedom were corrected using Huyn-Feldt estimates of sphericity ($\epsilon = .86$). The results showed significant difference between the four forms of violence ($F(2.57, 1257.14) = 260.73$ $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .35$).

Post-hoc tests revealed significant difference between all the pairs of forms of violence ($p < .001$).

The descriptive data on the Explanations for Violence Scale showed that in the total sample the item receiving the highest agreement is item 12 while the one receiving the lowest agreement is item 19. In the girls group the item receiving the highest agreement is item 7 while the one receiving the lowest agreement is item 19. In the boys group item 12 received the highest agreement and item 19 received the lowest agreement (see Table 4) which confirmed the trend

found in the total sample. The items that have obtained the highest mean in the boys group are 12, 1, 3, 14, 7, while the items that have obtained the highest mean in the girls group are 7, 14, 12, 1, 3. In contrast with the other scales the trend in this scale is reversed. The means obtained by the girls in 15 items are higher than the means obtained by the boys, indicating an inclination of the girls to agree with these explanations more than boys. The five items obtaining higher means in boys than in girls are: item 4 (Women provoke them) with 82% of boys answering from “sometimes” to “always ok”, item 5 (Women are not patient or tender enough with them) with 50% of boys answering from “sometimes” to “always ok”, item 17 (Women like it) with 21% of boys answering from “sometimes” to “always ok”, item 18 (That makes them attractive to women) with 22% of boys answering from “sometimes” to “always ok”, and item 19 (It is necessary) with 12 % of boys answering from “sometimes” to “always ok”.

Table 4 Items receiving the highest and the lowest agreement in Explanation for Violence Scale

Statement/Explanation	Overall		Boys		Girls	
	<i>M (S.D.)</i>	<i>“sometimes-often-always” % (N)</i>	<i>M (S.D.)</i>	<i>“sometimes-often-always” % (N)</i>	<i>M (S.D.)</i>	<i>“sometimes-often-always” % (N)</i>
12. They are jealous	2.68 (.82)	91 (442)	2.60 (.84)	89 (199)	2.74 (.81)	92 (243)
7. They want to control women	2.67 (.93)	86 (420)	2.43 (.89)	83 (185)	2.88 (.92)	89 (235)
1. Of alcohol or drug use	2.66 (.73)	92 (446)	2.59 (.70)	92 (207)	2.73 (.75)	91 (239)
14. They consider themselves superior to women	2.64 (.93)	86 (418)	2.44 (.89)	82 (183)	2.81 (.93)	89 (235)
3. They can't control their sexual urges	2.54 (.82)	89 (431)	2.47 (.77)	88 (197)	2.60 (.85)	89 (234)
19. It is necessary	1.14 (.45)	10 (49)	1.17 (.51)	12 (26)	1.11 (.40)	9 (23)

Notes. Min=1 (never), max = 4 (always).

T-Test conducted on the four composite variables (men’s nature, pathological causes, gender expectancies, women’s responsibility) by sex yielded significant differences in three cases: men’s nature ($t(485) = -4.81$ $p < .001$) with girls (2.56) obtaining higher mean score than boys

(2.29); pathological causes ($t(485) = -2.30, p < .05$) with girls (2.35) obtaining higher mean score than boys (2.23); women's responsibility ($t(485) = 4.02, p < .001$) with boys (1.80) obtaining higher mean score than girls (1.61).

The descriptive data on the KM showed that in the total sample the item receiving the highest agreement is item 18 while the one receiving the lowest agreement is item 16. In the girls group the item receiving the highest agreement is item 11 while the one receiving the lowest agreement is item 16. In the boys group the item receiving the highest agreement is item 2 while the item receiving the lowest agreement is 16 (see Table 5). The items that have obtained the highest mean in the boys group are 2, 18, 10, 11, 13, while the items that have obtained the highest mean in the girls group are 11, 18, 10, 2, 13.

Table 5 Items receiving the highest and the lowest agreement in KM

Statement/Explanation	Overall		Boys		Girls	
	<i>M (S.D.)</i>	<i>“agree – strongly agree” % (N)*</i>	<i>M (S.D.)</i>	<i>“agree – strongly agree” % (N)*</i>	<i>M (S.D.)</i>	<i>“agree – strongly agree” % (N)*</i>
18. Most women are concerned about whether men like them	2.70 (.84)	63 (304)	2.68 (.87)	62 (137)	2.73 (.81)	64 (167)
11. If a person is being abused, they could just exit the relationship	2.70 (1.09)	57 (274)	2.56 (1.06)	53 (116)	2.82 (1.10)	60 (158)
2. If a boy gets really jealous about his girlfriend it proves that he really cares for her	2.64 (.74)	58 (280)	2.85 (.69)	70 (156)	2.46 (.74)	47 (124)
10. Women are more likely to be sexually abused by a stranger than someone they know	2.56 (.83)	54 (262)	2.60 (.83)	58 (128)	2.52 (.83)	51 (134)
13. Sometimes girls provoke sexual aggression by boys because of the way they are dressed	2.43 (.84)	53 (257)	2.55 (.78)	56 (123)	2.34 (.88)	51 (134)
16. Men hit women simply because they love them	1.19 (.46)	1 (7)	1.27 (.52)	2 (4)	1.12 (.50)	1 (3)
Total	2.10 (.29)	488	2.16 (.27)	223	2.05 (.30)	265

Notes. Min=1 (never agree), max = 4 (always agree). * Included also the double responses “disagree – agree”

The means obtained by girls in 16 items are lower than the means obtained by boys. The significant difference between boys' responses and girls' responses was confirmed also by the analysis of variance obtained through Multiple Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) ($F(1, 486) = 20.98$ $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .04$) that produced a mean score of 2.16 for boys and a mean score of 2.05 for girls. Based on these data it is possible to conclude that boys tended to show higher prevalence in relation to myths on the romantic relationship than girls, even though sex explains only a small portion of the variability of the responses given by the two groups.

Analysis of variance to compare urban and rural actual residence and the 5 different schools. Analysis of variance through the Multiple Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was performed to see whether the mean scores obtained in the three scales (AWSA, ATV, KM) were influenced by the type of actual residence and school.

In the first case, significant difference was obtained between the two groups of actual residence (urban and rural) only in the responses given in the AWSA ($F(2, 487) = 3.98$ $p < .05$, partial $\eta^2 = .02$) with the first group having a mean score of 1.93 and the second one having a mean score of 1.98. In the ATV scale, the mean scores are 1.52 for the urban group and 1.55 for the rural group while in the KM the mean scores obtained by both groups are quite equal, 2.10.

The analysis of variance of the responses given by the groups determined by school produced significant difference in all the three scales. In the AWSA, the mean scores produced by the 5 groups differed significantly ($F(4, 485) = 11.08$ $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .08$). The mean scores obtained for each school are: 2.11 for ENAIP, 2.10 for Aldini Valeriani, 1.89 for Luigi Galvani, and 1.88 for both Enrico Fermi and Leonardo Da Vinci. Both post-hoc tests conducted, Tukey

and Tamhane showed significant difference between the mean scores produced by Aldini Valeriani school and three schools (Enrico Fermi, Leonardo Da Vinci, Luigi Galvani) and between ENAIP and the same three schools. Tukey test produced two homogeneous subsets, the first composed b Enrico Fermi, Leonardo Da Vinci and Luigi Galvani and the second composed of Aldini Valeriani and ENAIP (see Table 6).

Table 6 Tukey subtests

	NAME OF SCHOOL	N	Subset	
			1	2
Tukey HSD ^{a,b,c}	Enrico Fermi	96	1.88	
	Leonardo Da Vinci	126	1.88	
	Luigi Galvani	134	1.89	
	Aldini Valeriani	70		2.10
	ENAIP	64		2.11
	Sig.			1.000

The analysis of variance regarding the ATV mean scores obtained by the five groups defined by school showed significant difference ($F(4, 485) = 8.11$ $p < .001$, partial $\eta^2 = .06$). The mean scores obtained by each school are: 1.68 for ENAIP, 1.57 for Aldini Valeriani, 1.51 for both Luigi Galvani and Leonardo Da Vinci, and 1.47 for Enrico Fermi. As the assumption of equal variance between groups is not respected the post-hoc test conducted is Tamhane. This post-hoc test showed significant difference between mean scores obtained by ENAIP and three schools (Enrico Fermi, Leonardo Da Vinci, Luigi Galvani). There are no other significant difference between other schools.

Regarding the scores obtained in the KM, the analysis of variance yielded significant difference ($F(4, 483) = 3.89$ $p < .01$, partial $\eta^2 = .03$). As the assumption of equal variance between groups is not respected the post-hoc test considered is Tamhane. This post-hoc test showed no significant difference between mean scores obtained by different schools but the trend was

similar to the other two scales: the highest mean score was obtained by ENAIP (2.21) followed by Aldini Valeriani (2.15), then by Luigi Galvani (2.08) and the last ones are Enrico Fermi and Leonardo Da Vinci obtaining both the same mean score (2.06).

The correlation. The correlation analysis produced no significant correlation between age and any scale (AWSA, ATV and KM) and significant correlation between the mean scores of all the three scales:

- AWSA and ATV: $r=.35$; $n=490$; $p<.001$
- AWSA and KM: $r=.48$; $n=488$; $p<.001$
- ATV and KM: $r=.42$; $n=488$; $p<.001$

The descriptive statistics of Reasons 21 others in the Explanations for Violence Scale. As there were so many categories of response as the number of responses (tot. 40) it was decided to proceed with their grouping in less categories: betrayal/suspicion of betrayal, difficulty to communicate/relate, men's characteristics, women's characteristics, revenge, sense of inferiority/superiority, other. The most frequent category is the men's characteristics (tot. 14). Some categories emerged only in one group (boys or girls): betrayal/suspicion of betrayal (tot. 5) and revenge (tot. 2) emerged only in the boys group while sense of inferiority/superiority (tot. 9) only in the girls group.

3.2 Focus Group

Definition of violence in relationships. The most readily identified form of violence mentioned by participants is physical violence such as pushing, slapping or hitting. They indicated also psychological violence as offending and threatening and sexual violence as rape. The participants did not indicate any frequency of violence in Italy as the only information they had on violent episodes was transmitted to them through the mass media. They thought that

violence seems to be quite frequent on the basis of what they read in the newspapers, the internet or listened to on TV. They assume that the phenomenon is more visible due to policy changes in the law which had the effect to make violent incidents more easy to prosecute. The fact that persons discuss more about violence is considered a way to identify and to face the problem. The students think that the situation in Italy in relation to gender stereotyping is more critical than at the European level.

Girl: ...the fact that the persons discuss more about violence is a way to identify and to face the problem. So I think that in some way the situation is better than before. Even though the Italian situation is more critical than the European level regarding the gender stereotype.

Evaluation of awareness and knowledge. Both boys and girls sustained the opinion that generally the victim of violence is a woman especially in cases where there is sexual or economic violence. They sustain that even though nowadays the women work and earn money, economic violence happens because the man feels being a master.

No characteristics of the persons who exercise violence emerged from the participants, who concentrated more on the motives that cause violence.

The reasons that the participants gave as explanations for violence in relationships are various and include cultural causes, the Italian past during which women were considered as inferior to men, the organization of the society not considering the woman's point of view, and male physical strength due to the muscular mass. As a result of such perceptions of women, men developed a sense of physical and psychological possessiveness towards their partner. Girls sustained also the view that the culture and history have always underlined the role of the woman as a mother, denying her any other form of rights and a way of being. This has contributed in conceptualising women as weaker subjects, imagined only as bodies and nothing else.

Two boys identified other reasons that cause violence which are the anger, the frustration and the misunderstanding especially in a domestic context, where the man gets angry and gives vent to his anger on the woman when she is considered only an object.

For violence in the relationships, the participants blame mostly the society that develops stereotypes regarding the roles of the man and the woman.

Boy: for me beside the consequences, also the origin of the phenomenon are in the society, because we have the stereotype that considers the father as the boss even though both parents have a job and earn money. For me the first phase of the violence is this one: consider the man as the boss, as the commander.

Girl: so the society is the origin and the consequence. The children beaten by their father for example, will become aggressive.

Girl: Maybe for the position occupying in the society ... I mean the woman has always been left apart. Maybe the man has developed a desire of physical and psychological possessiveness toward the woman...

All the participants sustained unanimously that violence is never justified and necessary in a relationship. Violence is not justified even when there is a betrayal, no matter if it is the woman or the man betraying.

The consequences identified are the sense of being guilty and getting furious towards the person who exercises violence and a sense of insecurity, emptiness, and fear in the victim. The violence suffered also may cause or lead to a lack of trust in others, makes it difficult to enter other relationships.

The common profile of the victims of violence includes the following characteristics: lonely women; middle aged with children; (unanimously) poor; low educated; used to this kind of situation; both Italian and foreign origin. For students the low educated women are more abused because they are less conscious of the existence of violence than the highly educated ones. The one who exercises violence knows that a woman that is low educated will fight less for her own rights. One of the girls sustained also that having an underdeveloped critical thinking is another characteristic of the women abused and that this ability may be developed by the education received at school.

The context where the violence occurs, as identified by the participants, is that of the cohabitation in case of marriage or not.

Girl: ...within a relationship, therefore a marriage...a relationship that brings to cohabitation in the same house, same environment ...

They agreed in defining violence also as a single episode. It is not necessary to have different episodes of abuse in order to state that there is violence in a relationship.

There is no gender difference in the responses given and all the participants seemed to consider violence as typical of adult relationships, denying the frequency of this phenomenon in adolescent relationships.

Discussion of study findings. The moderator introduced some of the quantitative results obtained through the administration of the questionnaire. The data furnished to the participants in the focus group regarded the frequencies of the responses 'agree' and 'completely agree' with statements of the questionnaire that affirm that most of girls like to show off their bodies, that most boys like to go out with girls just for sex, that it is ok for a boy to push a girl into having

sex if they have been dating or if she has been flirting with him all night, that it is ok for a boy or a girl to spy on the mobile phone of the partner, that it is ok for a girl or a boy to set limits to where the partner goes, that it is ok for a boy to shout at his girlfriend, that most of the time hitting and shouting happen in grown-up relationships and rarely in adolescent relationships, that if a boy gets really jealous about his girlfriend it proves that he really cares for her, that financial difficulties are the most common reason for problems that involve violence in relationships, that women are more likely to be sexually abused by a stranger than someone they know, that sometimes girls provoke sexual aggression by boys because of the way they are dressed, and that most women are concerned about whether men like them.

The moderator tried to compare the opinions of the participants in the focus group with the opinions collected through the questionnaire also in relation to the reasons that may justify violence. The reasons discussed related to the sense of superiority of men and their necessity to control women, the use of alcohol and drugs, the provocation by the woman, and the presence of stress.

The participants in the focus group were really surprised with the results shown to them. Both girls and boys disagreed with the above statements except for the one affirming that most boys like to go out with girls just for sex. Both girls and boys agreed unanimously that most boys like to go out with girls just for sex and explained that there is a widespread stereotype that sustains that boys should have sex in order to be considered more manly.

Boy: Maybe always because of a stereotype that sustains that a man should have sex always

Boy: Maybe to give a good impression to others.

Boy.: Yes, maybe to appear manly.

Girl: Yes it's really a male chauvinist point of view.

The participants thought that the high agreement met in the students participating in the research with the statements that men hit the women because they provoke them and that they are more likely to be sexually abused by a stranger may be due to stereotypes nourished by TV and other mass media showing only violence committed by a stranger and never domestic violence.

The main sources of information on the phenomenon of violence given by the participants are mass media such as TV, especially television news, newspaper, internet. Schools seem for most participants to be only a sporadic source of information on violence as the interventions offered depend on the presence of an “illuminated” teacher that wants to discuss subjects regarding the disparity between genders, the women’s body and violence in the relationships. Someone of the participants has never had the possibility to read or discuss on such arguments at school.

The participants indicated school, family and society as responsible actors for the education of the new generation on how to relate to the other gender.

4. Discussion on quantitative and qualitative results

This research study is very important in the Italian context where there is a lack of research studies investigating the phenomenon of gender-based violence (GBV) in the adolescent population. The population, subject of this study, had to be composed by adolescents of 15-17 years old frequenting different types of high schools located in Bologna city and province. The final sample included also adolescents of 14, 18 and 19 years old in case they were frequenting the classes which participated in the questionnaire study. Including these three age groups in the study did not present a problem for the results of our study as, despite of the age, these adolescents were sharing the same phase of their life, frequenting the first or the fourth class of a

high school in Bologna, as well as they were the least frequent groups in our sample. The most frequent groups are the sixteen years old and the seventeen years old thus reflecting the target group of this research project.

The seriousness and the willingness showed by the students in participating in the project and in answering the questions of the questionnaire were striking due to the fact that adolescents generally are reluctant to participate and underestimate or depreciate initiatives similar to the one proposed. This brought us to think that they found interesting the argument proposed and felt the responsibility of the correctness of the data emerged. Most of them showed interest in participating in the following phases of the project or in other research studies on gender violence.

As three of the four scales used in the research were developed for the purposes of our study, it was very useful to investigate the reliability for our sample. This investigation produced reliable results that reassured on the general conclusions taken. One of the scales (Knowledge/Myths Scale) showed questionable internal consistency, two (Attitudes Toward Women Scale for Adolescents and Attitudes Toward Violence Scale) showed acceptable internal consistency and the last one (Explanations for Violence Scale) showed good internal consistency. Also the factors that emerged from the factor analysis of the Attitudes Toward Violence Scale and Explanation for Violence Scale, showed from questionable to good internal consistency except for factor 4 (Women's responsibility) of the second scale that showed poor internal consistency, despite its conceptual usefulness for the research.

The results obtained by the administration of the questionnaire prepared ad hoc for this research, were slightly skewed toward the opinions of girls as this gender group was bigger than the boys

group. The difference between the girls' and the boys' opinions was significant as confirmed by the analysis of variance and the chi-square test. For this reason, separate means were obtained for boys and girls beside the total ones. Through these three types of mean it was possible to compare the two gender groups with each other and also with the total sample realizing that boys tended to have more conservative attitudes regarding the women, higher tolerance for violence and higher prevalence of myths on the romantic relationship than girls do. Gender explains only a small portion of the variability of the responses given by the two groups, especially in the second and the third case.

Regarding the attitudes toward women, the results obtained in this study, converge with the results of the two Italian research studies described in the introduction section (Università degli studi di Parma, Provincia di Parma e AUSL di Parma, 2009); CREL Studi Ricerche e Formazione e Regione del Veneto, 2011) showing that boys have a more conservative point of view on gender roles than girls and that girls and boys agree that if both husband and wife have jobs, the husband should do a share of the housework. In our study, as in these previous research studies, girls agreed more than boys with this statement. The researchers in the research study implemented in Veneto region (CREL Studi Ricerche e Formazione e Regione del Veneto, 2011) sustained that the traditional attitudes toward the maintenance of asymmetric romantic relationship and gender roles were more frequent not only in boys but also in the students frequenting high schools offering technical and professional education. The same conclusion was obtained also in this research study as the students showing more conservative attitudes toward women, were those frequenting Enaip and Aldini Valeriani. The difference between schools was significant only in the case of these two schools when compared to the other three confirming the

hypothesis that the students from schools offering technical and professional education, are more conservative regarding gender roles.

The difference in the conservativeness of the attitudes was found also between the different areas of residence with students residing in rural areas showing more conservative attitudes than the students residing in urban areas.

Regarding gender violence, boys seemed to tolerate it more than girls. Despite this result, there were different statements obtaining higher agreement by the girls. Five of these statements regard violence by girls toward boys such as shouting, setting limits, spying on the mobile phone and two regarding violence of boys toward girls such as shouting.

Of the four forms of violent behaviour toward the partner emerged from the factor analysis shouting was tolerated mostly by both boys and girls. The second form of violent behaviour tolerated mostly was controlling followed by exerting pressure in order to have sexual encounter. The least tolerated was offending and hitting. Another interesting result which calls for further investigation is that violence was more tolerated by both boys and girls when exerted by girls rather than boys. These results are similar to what was obtained in the two Italian research studies (Università degli studi di Parma, Provincia di Parma e AUSL di Parma, 2009); CREL Studi Ricerche e Formazione e Regione del Veneto, 2011) that sustained that the severity of the violent behaviour depended on its form and on the gender of the perpetrator: slapping was the least tolerated form of violence studied and every form of violence was tolerated more when exerted by a woman.

It emerged also a difference between the students frequenting different schools. The students showing higher tolerance toward violence were those frequenting ENAIP which differed

significantly from three of the other schools participating in the research (Enrico Fermi, Leonardo Da Vinci, Luigi Galvani), confirming the abovementioned hypothesis, that in schools for professional education, prejudices regarding not only gender roles but also gender violence, are stronger and more persistent.

Boys showed having more myths and prejudices on romantic relationships than girls. The myth obtaining the highest agreement in boys concerned jealousy about girlfriend as a measure of his care while the myth obtaining the highest agreement in girls was that of exiting the relationship as a simple solution in case of abuse. The high agreement with this myth was unexpected but it may be due to a misunderstanding of its meaning though the researchers tried to highlight the word “just” by bolding it. Other myths most present in both boys and girls were that girls are concerned with whether men like them, that a woman has higher probability to be sexually abused by a stranger than by someone she knows, and that sometimes girls provoke sexual aggression because of the way they dress. These myths can lead young people to think that violence cannot be present in their intimate relationships and consider only the risk of being abused by unknown people. There is also a strong blaming the woman who is abused because of her clothes or her behaviour.

It was encouraging to know that the myth obtaining the lowest agreement concerned violence toward women as a sign of love. This results is somewhat similar to the one obtained in the two Italian research studies (Università degli studi di Parma, Provincia di Parma e AUSL di Parma, 2009); CREL Studi Ricerche e Formazione e Regione del Veneto, 2011) where the dissatisfaction in a romantic relationship depended on the presence of forms of violence between the partners.

There was difference in the presence of myths on the romantic relationship also between the students frequenting different schools. Even though there was no significant difference between each couple of schools as in the case of the attitudes toward women and violence, the students agreeing more with myths were those frequenting ENAIP followed by those frequenting Aldini Valeriani, reconfirming our hypothesis on the usefulness of a more complete education in relation to the prejudices and myths on the gender roles and relationship.

The trend observed in the attitudes toward women and violence and in the myths and knowledge on the romantic relationship was reversed in the case of the Explanations for Violence having the girls justifying mostly the violence exerted by men toward women. In only 5 reasons furnished to the students we had boys agreeing more than girls. Two of these reasons set the cause in the women's responsibility while the other three regarded the gender expectancies. The whole sample tended to justify violence mostly when it was attributed to men's nature. Looking separately at the responses of boys and girls, it emerged that girls tended to justify violence more than boys when they attributed it to men's nature, to men's possible mental problems or alcohol or drug abuse and to having been abused during infancy, while boys tended to justify violence more than girls when they attributed it to women's behaviour and attitude. The analysis of the other reasons indicated by the students, showed an inclination of the boys to justify violence toward women in case there's betrayal or suspicion of betrayal while the girls tended to attribute violent acts to a sense of inferiority or superiority that men may have. It was decided to keep together both the terms "sense of inferiority" and "sense of superiority" as the participants may have used these terms as interchangeable and the researchers had no chance to clarify it. In contrast with these results, the two Italian research studies found that betrayal was considered

more severe than the violence exerted and that girls tended to tolerate it less than boys (Università degli studi di Parma, Provincia di Parma e AUSL di Parma, 2009); CREL Studi Ricerche e Formazione e Regione del Veneto, 2011).

The reasons set in the gender characteristics of men or women were equally chosen by boys and girls. One other reason given by both girls and boys to justify violence was the difficulty to communicate or relate. Therefore a recommendation can be made, that working on the communication skills of adolescents may be very important and fruitful.

Beside gender, residence and school, age was investigated too to see whether it influenced the responses given in the scales. In contrast with the results of the two Italian research studies (Università degli studi di Parma, Provincia di Parma e AUSL di Parma, 2009); CREL Studi Ricerche e Formazione e Regione del Veneto, 2011), in this study age did not influence the conservativeness of the attitudes toward women and violence and the presence of myths on the romantic relationship.

Difficulties encountered by students in the questionnaire because of the easy choice of alternatives provided, seem to be weaker when the questions are open and the confrontation with other students is possible as it happened during the focus group. This experience was very useful not only for the research but also for the participants that had the possibility (chance) to face arguments very common in their everyday life and get more data on the gender violence between both adults and adolescents. It emerged clearly that all participants perceived physical, psychological, sexual violence, pushing, raping, slapping, hitting, offending as violence even though the most readily identified form of violence, was the physical one. The fast and easy recognition of the physical violence by adolescents may be attributed to the fact that the physical

abuse is common in intimate relationships of young people as found by different research studies conducted in Italy (Comune di Modena. Perspective Project: Workpackage II Report). Similar to the results of another Italian research study conducted by Save the Children Italia onlus (2010) it seems that there's an underestimation of the severity of the psychological violence in relation to the recognition of the high severity of the physical violence not only between adults but also between adolescents. One other behaviour perceived by some participants as violence was whistling as a sign of appreciation of the physical attractiveness of a girl.

All the participants seemed to agree that the prevalence of violence in romantic relationships nowadays is less frequent because of policy changes and changes in the myth considering violence an intimate fact not to discuss with others. The participants agreed also with the myth that the victim is usually a middle aged lonely woman with children, poor, low educated, and used to this kind of situation. Some positive aspects emerged by the focus group discussion such as identifying the domestic context as the principal place where the violence occurs. The hypothesis that violence occurs mostly in domestic context is confirmed by the national data (Istat, 2007). One other positive aspect emerged by the discussion was that violence is never justified and necessary in a romantic relationship but brings about various consequences harmful to the mental and physical health of both partners and to the society as a whole. The society seems to be principally responsible for the violence in the relationships as it develops stereotypes regarding the roles of man and woman. The stereotypes on gender violence are nourished also by the mass media that were indicated as the main source of information for the participants. This opinion converges to what other researches showed: "the root cause of gender-based violence in all its forms is gender inequality and the patriarchal structure of our societies and traditional power relations which endorse male gender roles to include abusive behaviour to gain or hold on

control over a woman” (Comune di Modena. Perspective Project: Workpackage II Report). Thanks to the data furnished by the moderator on the frequency of violence, its forms, context and perpetrators, the participants revised the opinions they had on the incidence of gender violence.

Another important source of information, even though sporadic, is the education offered at school. As the participants indicated the school, family and society as responsible actors on the education of the new generation in terms of how to relate to the other gender, interventions aiming at the information and training of these actors should be the next important step of this project.

Limitations

One limitation of this study regards the selection of the high schools involved. Even though they represent most of the types of high school provided by the Italian education system it is not proper using the term representative of the area. The high schools offering artistic studies were left out of the study as the association had no previous contact. Involving these schools in the study would have taken a lot of precious time used instead to contact a lot of other schools. Beside the non representativeness of the types of high school selected there is one more limitation. Each school involved in the study offers different classes (es. chemistry, mechanics, electronics, etc. in a school offering technical studies) but only some of them participated.

5. Conclusions and Recommendations

It was revealed that adolescents often do not recognise gender based violence in their intimate and peer relationships, and do not treat such incidents as forms of abuse but as normal behaviour.

The most readily identified form of violence is the physical one while psychological violence is quite unrecognized.

Adolescents do not consider GBV as an issue that involves them directly but rather consider it a 'grown-up' problem, possibly because it has been more frequently framed as such by national policies. Also they have an idea of common profile of the victims of violence that doesn't correspond to the reality: lonely women; middle aged with children; poor; low educated; used to this kind of situation and they think that sexual violence is more often committed by unknown persons. This might have as a consequence that they consider violence in intimate relationships as an issue that hardly could involve them as victims or as perpetrators.

For these reasons there is an imminent need to raise young people's awareness on gender stereotypes and gender based violence.

Adolescents consider school as a source for sporadic information regarding the above issue. School is a critical component of adolescents' lives and one of the main contexts where gender socialization takes place and where attitudes toward one-self and others are being formed and reinforced. Therefore, the education system should try to pay more attention to gender stereotypes and gender based violence.

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