



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: Spain

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December 2011

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## 1. Introduction

Gender violence persists as a pressing social problem in Spain. The Women's Institute collects official statistical data on gender violence since 1999, reporting a total of 764 women mortal victims of gender violence thorough the period 1999 - 2011<sup>1</sup>. The last data available on the ages of these victims (MSPSI, 2010) reveals that in 2009, 29,1% were aged 29 or younger. This data highlights the erroneous conception that associates gender violence to mature and older women, being in a traditional relationship, and dependent from their male partners. The international literature has extensively demonstrated that violent relationships are frequent and repetitive among young males and females (Oliver & Valls, 2004).

On the other hand, recent studies also reveal that there is a high rejection of the gender violence among society, as something unacceptable (91,6%) even while a majority of the population thinks that it is a widespread phenomenon hard to eliminate (87%) (MSPSI, 2010). This perception is higher (94,0%) in the case of those aged between 18 and 20 years old, who also perceive gender violence as inevitable, up to 6,5 points more than the total of the population (MSPSI, 2010).

In relation to policies and measures confronting the challenge of gender violence, it is noteworthy to highlight that the Spanish government was the first European government to approve an Act Against Gender Violence, in 2004 (Organic Act 1/2004 of 28<sup>th</sup> of December). The change in the legal consideration of gender violence led to diverse measures to improve the women's protection from gender violence. However, this Act did not take into account the scientific evidences that gender violence occurs in dating and sporadic relationships (Duque, 2006; Valls et. al., 2008). In consequence, crimes

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.inmujer.es/> (accessed in September 2011)

and aggressions perpetrated in a date or during a party are not considered gender violence if there has not been a courtship before. Furthermore, laws at regional level corrected this reductionism. The Act on the Right of Women to Eradicate Chauvinist Violence by the Catalan Parliament (Llei, 2008), already identifies gender violence as occurring not only as domestic violence (in a stable relationship) but also as dating violence (in sporadic relationships).

The Acts have also emphasized the need to tackle the problem from childhood and the schools. Specifically, the Acts against gender violence (both at a national level and regional level) do include the training on gender violence identification and prevention for the teachers and professionals of education. A recent report has been published about the equality and prevention of gender violence in adolescence (Díaz Aguado y Carvajal, 2011) showing differences between young students and their teachers in relation to the perceptions of causes, reality and ways for overcoming gender violence. This report also reflects the work which is being done at the moment in secondary schools in Spain, concerning prevention of gender violence.

Most of the programmes are centred on the analysis of sexism, inequalities, and stereotypes still dominating in society. Some campaigns and programmes targeted to adolescents are focused on the characteristics of love relationship, stressing respect and equality, against control and violence (INJUVE, 2009). However, many of these programmes have not considered until the last years the link that it is frequently established between violence and attractiveness.

And in fact, several researches in Spain have been focused on teenagers' socialization process and identified the influence of the inherited attraction for violence which is exalted in many social products and interactions (Oliver & Valls, 2004; Gómez, 2004;

Duque, 2006; Valls, Puigvert & Duque, 2008; Flecha, Pulido & Christou, 2011)<sup>2</sup>. They provide suggestions for working on the framework of a “preventive socialization of gender violence” which is understood as “a social process that leads us to develop a consciousness on norms and values to prevent those attitudes and behaviour that promote violence against women and to favour egalitarian and respectful attitudes” (Oliver & Valls, 2004: 13). Also, recent developments are being done with the study of causes, consequences and erroneous perceptions for which some young girls establish relationships with people who respond to a traditional masculinity model in the cases that prevail imposition and rejection (Oliver, 2010-2012).

This report presents the results of a study developed in Spain during 2011, within the framework of the Daphne project “Attitudes on Gender Stereotypes and Gender-based Violence among Youth”. Both quantitative and qualitative data have been collected and they allow us to present some conclusions about the perceptions and beliefs of the participating young students concerning sexual and love relationships, gender violence, gender roles, etc. First we will describe the methodology of the study; in the following section we will present quantitative and qualitative results separately. Then we will discuss these results with the scientific literature. Finally, some conclusions and recommendations will be provided.

## **2. Methodology**

The research comprised a first stage with a questionnaire reporting on quantitative data, and then a second stage with qualitative focus groups with adolescents.

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<sup>2</sup> These researches are part of the research on theories of love initiated by Jesús Gómez (Gómez, 2004) and continued by the Women’s Group of CREA: SAFO.

## 2.1 Quantitative questionnaire

The questionnaires were administered to 401 girls and boys of the age of 15 to 17 years, students of secondary and post-obligatory education.

The sample was obtained from 5 educational institutions and one sports club, all of them in the region of Catalonia (north-east of Spain). The search for potential educational institutions to participate in the project was conducted by means of a database with schools that had participated in other projects or activities connected to gender violence and its prevention. All the contacted institutions were very interested in the project and in many cases asked for more information, despite some of them were not able to participate due to other commitments. Finally, the selected centres were the following:

<b>Centre A</b> High School in a city next to Barcelona (Sant Boi de Llobregat). It is a public institution with secondary and post-compulsory education levels.
<b>Centre B</b> High School located in a city near Barcelona (Terrassa). It offers several educational levels and programmes: secondary education, post-compulsory education and vocational training in different fields.
<b>Centre C</b> High School situated in a coastal town near Barcelona (Castelldefels). It offers secondary and post-compulsory education and vocational training of different educational levels.
<b>Centre D</b> Private school with funds from the regional government. Located in a city near Tarragona (Reus). It offers primary and secondary education.
<b>Centre E</b> High School located in the city of Tarragona. It offers secondary education, post-compulsory education and vocational training in different fields.
<b>Centre F</b> Group of rhythmic gymnastics located in Tarragona.

The participant institutions received all necessary information about the project by e-mail and telephone, and were asked to provide a consent form of their participation. After that, meetings were organised in the framework of classes for distributing the

surveys. In these meetings, researchers again informed students and their teachers about the objectives and the activities of the fieldwork and the voluntary and anonymous character of their participation. All students in the classes agreed on participating and filled in the questionnaires, which were distributed among them during that session. The questionnaire is divided in several parts: Part I, Attitudes toward women; Part II, Attitudes toward violence; Part III socioeconomic data.

The questionnaires were collected during the months of May and June 2011, coinciding with the final period of academic year. As soon as all questionnaires required were collected, the data was introduced into the SPSS Analysis Software.

## **2.2 Qualitative focus groups**

Two focus groups were conducted with adolescents in one single High School which had previously participated in the questionnaire (Centre A). The management team of the centre was especially interested, and also they were carrying out a programme on conflict mediation. A total of 13 adolescents (9 girls and 4 boys) participated in two focus groups. Both groups mixed boys and girls. Their ages from 14 to 17 years.

**Group 1 (G1).** Three girls and three boys. Ages 14 – 17 years old.

**Groups 2 (G2).** Six girls and one boy. Ages 15 – 17 years old.

The focus group guide was translated and adapted to Spanish, and it covered the following issues: introduction (presentation of the project, issue, aims); definition of violence in relationships; evaluation of awareness and knowledge; discussion of study findings; conclusions. The discussion was oriented to the attitudes and perceptions attained by adolescents in relation to the gender based violence and also about discussing results from the questionnaire and other related researches.

### 3. Results

#### 3.1 Questionnaire study about attitudes on gender stereotypes and gender-based violence among youth

The results obtained through the data analysis of the questionnaires answered by the students can be divided into different parts, following the structure of the interview itself. The first part refers to the adolescent's attitudes towards women and is based on a scale from 1 to 4, being 1 "strongly disagree" and 4 "strongly agree" with the statements. The scale on the adolescent's attitudes towards violence and on the reasons that people give to explain why men may sometimes be violent towards women is also expressed from 1 to 4, being 1 behaviours or reasons that are "never acceptable" and 4 "always acceptable".

In the first part of the questionnaire the questions are related to the adolescent's attitudes towards women. As the main results it is important to highlight the statements that were mostly supported by the students and those with which they agreed less. On the statement that having many sexual relationships is more acceptable for boys than for girls the answers are in the ranges of the scale from 1 to 4 with 2.85 as the mean, this indicates that a major part agrees with the statement. Nevertheless, differences among the answers exist and placed some of the adolescents in strong disagreement and others as agreeing on the issues. The statement that most boys like to go out with girls just for sex also evokes positive evaluation as the mean of the answers is 2.7. At the same time the statement that most girls like to show off their bodies is confirmed by many students as the mean is 2.67. Furthermore, the mean of the adolescents' answers on the statement that on the average girls are not smarter than boys is 2.74 which mean that an important part of students agree on this topic.

On the other hand, the statements that girls should not have the same freedom as boys and that they should be more concerned with becoming good wives and mothers rather than desire a professional or business career are denied by great part of the adolescents, according to the respective means of 1.46 and 1.52. Furthermore the statement that housework should not be done by both members, if both of them have jobs, and that more encouragement to go to college should not be given to the sons than to the daughters are rejected as well with a mean of the answers in both cases of 1.53.

The means of the other statements are below 2.5 which points out that a major part of the answers are in the categories “strongly disagree” and “disagree” with the statements. Nevertheless and as already mentioned the distribution of the answers is among all the categories.

<b>Questions</b>	<b>Mean</b>
It is more acceptable for a boy to have many sexual partners than for a girl.	2.85
On the average, girls are not smarter than boys.	2.74
Most boys like to go out with girls just for sex.	2.7
Most girls like to show off their bodies.	2.67
Girls should not have the same freedom as boys.	1.46
Girls should be more concerned with becoming good wives and mothers rather than desiring a professional or business career.	1.52
If both husband and wife have jobs, the husband should do a share of the housework such as washing dishes and doing the laundry.	1.53
More encouragement in a family should be given to sons than daughters to go to college.	1.53

In the following section the focus is set on attitudes towards violence. The answers to the questions in this section reveal that there are some attitudes that the adolescents do never accept in relationships. As the mean of each of the statements indicates, among these unacceptable behaviours is the fact that a boy pushes a girl into having sex if they have been dating (mean 1.33) or if he has spent a lot of money on her (mean 1.25). The mean of the adolescents' answers to the behaviour that a boy hits his partner if she has been unfaithful is 1.11 and if she is constantly nagging or arguing is 1.16, which means that most of the answers are never accepting this kind of behaviour. Moreover, the attitudes to insult the partner in front of others, threaten the other in order to achieve something or that a girl sets limits on how her boyfriend dresses are also rejected by a great part of the students, as the mean in all cases is close to 1 "strongly disagree".

<b>It is ok ...</b>	<b>Mean</b>
... for a girl to insult her boyfriend in front of others.	1.06
... for a boy to insult his girlfriend in front of others.	1.07
... for a boy hit his girlfriend if she has been unfaithful.	1.11
... for a boy to hit his girlfriend if she is constantly nagging/arguing.	1.16
...for a boy to push a girl into having sex if he has spent a lot of money on her.	1.25
... to threaten to leave a partner in order to achieve something you want.	1.27
...for a boy to push a girl into having sex if they have been dating.	1.33
...for a girl to set limits on how her boyfriend dresses.	1.45

Nevertheless, the data further reveals that there are other attitudes that the adolescents do accept, according to the mean at least sometimes. These behaviours are setting limits to where the partner goes (mean 1.63 and 1.79) or to shout at the partner if he (mean 1.87) or she (1.79) does not treat the other one with respect or if he (1.99) or she (1.85) is constantly nagging or arguing. As can be observed in the table the mean of the respective attitudes is higher in case of the girls to set limits or to shout at their partner.

<b>It is ok...</b>	<b>Mean</b>
... for a boy to set limits to where his girlfriend goes.	1.63
... for a girl to set limits to where her boyfriend goes.	1.79
... for a boy to shout at his girlfriend if she is not treating him with respect.	1.79
... for a girl to shout at her boyfriend if he is not treating her with respect.	1.87
... for a boy to shout at his girlfriend if she is constantly nagging/ arguing.	1.85
... for a girl to shout at her boyfriend if he is constantly nagging/ arguing.	1.99

The third section of the questionnaire is focused on the reasons that people often give to explain why men may sometimes be violent toward women. The data shows that almost all the reasons at least sometimes are considered by the adolescents a reason for men to be violent towards women. The reasons with the highest value of the mean are that men consider themselves superior to women (mean 2.89) and because men want to control women (mean 2.87). Furthermore, the mean of the argument that men may be violent towards women because they are jealous is 2.72, in between the answers of sometimes and often is a reason. Further reasons with an elevated mean are that men are physically stronger than women (mean 2.64), that violence towards women occurs when men use alcohol or drugs (mean 2.59), and that men cannot control their anger (mean 2.58).

<b>Some men are violent toward women because...</b>	<b>Mean</b>
...they consider themselves superior to women	2.89
...they want to control women	2.87
...they are jealous	2.72
...they are physically stronger than women	2.64
... of alcohol or drug use	2.59

The last section centres on the students' knowledge on gender violence and on their agreement with myths on this issue. The results reveal that in general the adolescents tend to agree with the myths rather than to disagree.

The means indicate that especially the statement that if a person is being abused, he or she could just exit the relationship (mean 3.33) is the one that the adolescents most agree with. Furthermore, the answers to the statement that women are more likely to be sexually abused by a stranger than by someone they know have a mean of 2.61. Another striking result is the mean of 2.56 of the answers to the statement that if a boy gets really jealous about his girlfriend it proves that he really cares for her. Moreover the mean of the answers to the statement that most women are concerned about whether men like them is 2.86.

On the other hand, the mean of the statement that men hit women simply because they love them is 1.39 and indicates that many answers are rejecting this idea.

In case of the mean of the statement that women are just as likely to be violent toward their partners as men the mean is 2.81, even though the answers differ from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”. There are also differences among the answers related to the statements “When a girl says ‘no’ to her partner sexual advances this often means

‘yes’ and that “financial difficulties are the most common reason for problems that involve violence in relationships”.

<b>Statement</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Variation</b>
If a person is being abused, they could just exit the relationship.	3.33	0.86
Most women are concerned about whether men like them.	2.86	0,81
Women are just as likely to be violent toward their partners as men.	2.81	1.78
Women are more likely to be sexually abused by a stranger than someone they know	2.61	0.86
If a boy gets really jealous about his girlfriend it proves that he really cares for her.	2.56	0.82
When a girl says ‘no’ to her partner’s sexual advances this often means ‘yes’.	2.33	1.88
Financial difficulties are the most common reason for problems that involve violence in relationships.	2.3	1.76

Contemplating Cronbach’s Alpha for the elaborated scales on the attitudes towards women and the attitudes towards violence, it is noteworthy that both scales are reliable to indicate the students’ attitude. In case of the scale on reasons why men may sometimes be violent towards women the indicator of reliability is a little lower but still good.

In order to identify the factors that influence the adolescents attitudes correlations among different variables have been calculated. The results obtained in the analysis show that the age of the adolescents has no influence on their attitudes towards women and violence, and neither on their knowledge or belief of the myths on this issue. Similarly, the analysis of the answers according to the sex of the interviewed does not show relevant differences among girls and boys.

On the contrary, the variables of attitudes towards women and towards violence and the knowledge and myths on gender violence influence each other mutually.

### **3.2. Qualitative study about attitudes on gender stereotypes and gender-based violence among youth**

#### **How teenagers define the violence in relationships**

In the first part of the focus group, students were asked to define the violence in relationships. In this sense, students present a wide definition of gender violence ranging from physical to other negative attitudes toward a person of the opposite sex. In particular, one girl participating in the focus group defines gender violence like any negative attitude toward the partner.

*“For me, it is any negative attitude that you have towards another person. For instance... to ignore him or her, hitting, insulting and so on, but I think that there are more; I mean, if you ignore him, or... I don't know: any negative attitude” (G2).<sup>3</sup>*

Two other girl students reinforce this wide definition stating that controlling the partner, manipulating or emotionally blackmailing are seen as gender violence.

*“M: The control that one person of the couple exerts upon the other.  
L: Manipulation. To influence the other person to do certain things... maybe she/he doesn't want to do it, but the other tell her: “if you do that...”. Emotional blackmail” (G2, 07:32>07:47)<sup>4</sup>*

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<sup>3</sup> My own translation. Original (catalan): *Per mi és qualsevol tipus d'actitud negativa que tu dones cap a una altra persona. Com per exemple... ignorar-la, pegar-l'hi, insultar-l'hi i tal, però crec que a part d'aquestes dues n'hi ha més, és a dir, si tu la ignores o... no sé: tota actitud negativa.*

<sup>4</sup> My Own translation. Original (catalan). *M: El control que exerceix una persona de la parella sobre l'altra. L: Manipulació. Influir en l'altra persona que faci coses... a lo millor no vol fer-ho però si l'altra li diu si fas això... xantatge emocional.”* Initials do not correspond to real names of the students.

According to the focus groups, some students also believe that in some cases it is hard to identify some behaviour as gender violence, until it is really obvious. One of the participating girls gave an example of how she did not recognize some violent behaviour as violence in a former personal relationship, in which she endured a situation of repression for a long time, with health consequences as an anxiety attack.

*J: Of course, we say no, this is not mistreatment, but I had... I have lived that a partner tells you “don’t go out”, or “stay here”, I’ve been repressed. I stayed for a long time and I didn’t realise, and “stay here”, or “don’t go”, or “why are you leaving” (...) at the end, there is a moment in which... calls at every time, and I even had an anxiety attack...” (G1, 6:25 > 7:00)<sup>5</sup>*

A male class-mate reinforces the idea of the difficulties in detecting violent behaviours and considers that in many cases peers cannot identify violence because it takes place in the intimacy. Moreover, he believes that arguing is something normalized within a couple's relationship.

*G: You will never know at 100% because usually, if he would hit her partner he will do it in the intimacy, and the most you can see is a fight or argument, and an argument is something usual between two, in a couple. Then there are many arguments in favour and against, but you can never sense what is behind that. (G1, 8:48 > 9:48)<sup>6</sup>*

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<sup>5</sup> És clar, nosaltres diem que no, que no és maltractament, però jo sí que tinc, jo sí que he viscut de que amb una parella doncs, doncs no surtis, o quedat aquí, o sigui, he estat reprimida, vaig estar un temps llarg i no em donava compte, i quedat aquí, o no vagis, o per què surts,...[...]perquè arriba un moment en que..., trucades a tota hora, i vaig arribar a tenir un atac d’ansietat i..., bueno, al final, s’ha de posar...

<sup>6</sup> Mai t’arribaràs a enterar al 100% perquè normalment li pegarà a la seva parella o alguna cosa o farà a la intimitat i tu el màxim que pots veure és una baralla o una discussió, i una discussió és usual entre, entre un, entre dos, entre una parella, dins de lo que cap hi ha moltes discussions i punts en contra, però que tu mai pots intuir que hi ha darrera d’això.

### 3.3 Evaluation of youth awareness and knowledge about gender violence and gender roles

#### Victims and the perpetrators

The second part of the focus groups evaluated the awareness and knowledge about gender violence and gender roles. First, students were asked about who they think do suffer more violence (men or women). They tended to state that girls are more exposed than boys to the gender violence. One of the boys answered without hesitation in this way.

*Who suffers more violence usually?*

*P: Women (G1, 21:56 > 22:05)<sup>7</sup>*

Starting from this idea, the same student states that parents are said to control more girls than boys because they perceive that girls are more likely to be attacked. On the other hand, he thinks parents do control less their sons because they believe their children will not be abused by a girl.

*Parents do control more girls than boys, with boys it doesn't matter 'cause you know that a girl will not do anything unusual to you, and, I don't know, they [the parents] try to control more them [the girls] to.. to be aware if there is any bad feeling or something with their boyfriend (G1, 5:20).<sup>8</sup>*

Regarding the characteristics associated to the victim and the perpetrator, similarly to the statements of the questionnaires, students thought that the person who exercises violence considers himself superior to women and he is unable to show his feelings. One of the boys describes them like cold persons who always want to be right.

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<sup>7</sup> *Qui habitualment pateix més violència? Les dones.*

<sup>8</sup> *Els pares controlen més a les noies que als nois, en canvi amb els nois no passa res perquè saps que una nena no et farà re dintre de lo inusual, i no sé, , intenten controlar-les més els pares, perquè..., s'assabentin de si passa algun mal roïllo o alguna cosa amb el xicot.*

*They are people that want, I mean, that feel that they are better than the others, and they want to be above her, they want to be always right. Probably it is a cold person, as he doesn't... I mean, he shows his feelings, but when he does something like that, he does not (G1, 22:11 > 22:33)<sup>9</sup>*

In relation to victims, students consider they must be timid and cowardly people who forgive episodes of aggression and that believe that abuses to be isolated cases. According to a boy, victims don't belong to any particular social class, but he associates the profile of the victim with weak character, sensitive and manipulable, whereas if it were a brave person wouldn't accept living situations of abuse.

*No, do not social class, but probably a person who will be attacked is usually a person who is more... more affable, let's say, more sensitive, who is manipulated in situations, thus it is usually someone that, allows repetition of assaults, even verbal... because if someone has a strong character and strong mentality and it happens, she would send him packing at the first time (...) if they have a strong character yes, but of course, if she is a shy person, with more fears, then maybe says "ok, it has happened today, but it will not occur more". And it happen again but no, she let it happen because she still thinks that will change or something"(G1, 31:24 > 32:56)<sup>10</sup>*

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<sup>9</sup> "és gent que vol, o sigui, que es creuen que és millor que altres persones, i vol estar per sobre d'ella, vol sempre tindre la raó, segurament és una persona que és freda, ja que no mo-, o sigui, mostra els seus sentiments, però a l'hora de fer una cosa així no els mostra".

<sup>10</sup> No classe social no, però possiblement la persona que és agredida sol ser una persona, que és més... més afable, diguem, més sensible, que es deixa manipular per les situacions i tal, llavors això sol ser la persona que, o sigui, que si hi ha reiteracions d'agressions ja siguin verbals i tal, perquè normalment si una persona té un caràcter fort i és forta de mentalitat i passa això l'envia a pastar fang a la primera [...] si tenen un caràcter fort sí, però clar, si és una persona que és més tímida, que té més por i tal, tx, potser diu bueno, ha passat avui, però no passarà més, i segueix passant i no, ho deixa passar perquè segueix pensant que canviarà o algo.

As we have seen in the field work, students don't associate gender-based violence to any particular social class but they have encountered opinions in the perception of **age groups** regarding gender violence. A dialogue in one of the focus groups reveals this perception of the gender violence incidence on different age groups.

*J: Well, now, at any age ...*

*P: In the adulthood*

*J: ... now, slowly it is every time more frequent among more and more young ages...*

*P: But still now there are more adults than young people.*

*J: But, this is the mirror of where are we the youth going, isn't it? Because if we are supposed to do what we are taught; this is being taught to us now. (G1, 10:55 > 11:30)[...]*

*P: Now yes, well [...] Now is already more frequent to respect each other in youth than in adulthood (G1, 13:07 > 13:17)<sup>11</sup>*

### **Teenagers' causes or reasons of gender violence**

The students who participated in the focus groups believed that violence against women often occurs because men want to control women and because they cannot control their anger. One of the boys considered that violence appears when men who tend to control women get angry and use violence because is the only solution they know to resolve the conflict.

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<sup>11</sup> *J: Home ara, en qualsevol...*

*P: a l'edat adulta*

*J: ... ara, poc a poc, cada vegada és més freqüent, en edats més, mésjoves...*

*P: Però encara avui dia predomina més l'adulta*

*J: Però, aquest és el reflexa del que estem anant ara la joventut, no? Perquè si suposadament el que hem de fer nosaltres és el que ens ensenyen, el que més s'està ensenyant ara és això. (G1, 10:55 > 11:30)[...]*

*P: Ara sí, bueno [...] Ara ja és més freqüent respec-te de joves que de grans(G1, 13:07 > 13:17)*

*It can happen that one day, for any reason this person - the one who is a controller and so on – has not liked the situation; for instance he/she has been saying “don’t do that” and the other has done it... then, he/she gets angry so much than the unique solution he/she finds is to use violence so the other learn not to do that. (G1, 23:15 > 24:07)<sup>12</sup>*

According to the teenagers’ discussions, they have different opinions about if violence behaviours are the result of innate characteristics or the result of a socialization process. One of the girls remembered a situation in a class conversation, in which a (boy) classmate referred to violence as inertia and an irrational instinct, linked to jealousy.

*The day of the workshop, we were talking in class, and a boy suddenly said: “if I see her with someone else, I’d kill her”. And he said it like this! and the teacher asked him: why? And he replied: “because I am not able to see the person I love with another person”. And I asked him: “but if you love her so much, how could you even kill her?” and he said me “I don’t know, is inertia”. (G2, 20:56>21:28)<sup>13</sup>*

Throughout the focus groups it has been detected teenagers considerations of gender violence as a result of both factors, innate and acquired through socialization. When the students were asked about where they thought violence is learned, they pointed out places like home, street or on TV.

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<sup>12</sup> [...] potser que hagi passat de que un dia per qualsevol cosa aquesta persona, la que és una controladora i tal, no li hagi agradat una situació, o per exemple li hagi estat dient, no facis això hi ho fet l’altre persona, o sigui, es cabreja fins a tal punt que l’única solució que veu és utilitzar la violència per tal de que aprengui a no fer allò.

<sup>13</sup> “El dia de la xerrada vem parlar a classe i un nen va saltar i va dir: yo es que si la veo con otro la mato. I ho va dir així i la professora li va dir: per què? I ell va dir: perquè no sóc capaç de veure una persona que estimo amb un altra persona. Jo li vaig preguntar: però si l’estimes tant, com podries arribar a matar-la? I em va dir, és que no sé, es que: inèrcia.”

*G: At home*

*J: On the TV*

*P: In the street*

*(G1, 11:30 > 11:38)<sup>14</sup>*

But later in the same conversation, the girl who said that violence is learned on TV considers violent behaviours as innate features. When we asked if she thought it was innate or a learned behaviour, she added that it could depend on the character of the person but also on his or her context and the interactions with others.

*J: It can also be something innate of the person*

*[...] Before, all you have said that it is learned...*

*J: It depends where the person has grown up, the people with whom he/she has relations and how, and his/her personality. (G1, 23:15 > 24:07)<sup>15</sup>*

### **Perceptions about the consequences of gender violence**

Youth who participated in the focus group considered that gender violence has consequences both individually and socially. According to a girl, at the individual level, people who live this kind of relationship is so centred in the relationship that it makes her to be isolated and to lose their social ties.

*A person can enclose herself very much in the relationship and not having other affective ties with other persons (G2, 31:19>31:25)<sup>16</sup>*

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<sup>14</sup> *G: A casa. J: A la tele P: Al carrer.*

<sup>15</sup> *J: Pot ser una cosa innata també de la persona*

*[...] Abans heu dit que s'aprèn...*

*J: Depèn on s'ha criat aquesta persona, de la gent amb la que es relacioni i com, quina personalitat tingui.*

<sup>16</sup> *“Que una persona es pot tancar molt en la relació i pot deixar de tenir vincles efectius amb les demés persones.”*

On the other hand, a boy reflects on the hostility that is generated when people know that there are abuses in a relationship. He suggests that people tend to withdraw from the conflict and points out the need to support victims.

*It appears a kind of hostility (...)].A man hits his wife, and then is like that everyone moves away, because... you can't be a friend of someone violent, capable to do such a thing to his wife.... Instead of helping the woman, this would also be a nice thing to do. (G2, 31:27>31:51)<sup>17</sup>*

### **Youngsters' perceptions about the situations where gender violence occurs**

In the focus groups, students also explained their perceptions about the situation where gender violence occurs. Here, they agree that violence is more likely to occur in situations of intimacy, without the possibility of witnesses. When we asked about the places where violence may happen, students insist that it is always in private spheres. We can see these perceptions in the dialogue between Sandra, Pere and Julia.

*S: in the private life...*

***In private life?***

*P: At home*

***Yes? So, usually is at home... without witnesses.....***

*S: Yes*

*And for instance, if there is a party, a party of...*

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<sup>17</sup> “Es crea una espècie d’hostilitat [...]. Este hombre le pega a su mujer, i ja és com que tothom s’aparta perquè no vas... no pots ser amic d’algú que és violent, que fa això a la seva dona, no? Enlloc d’ajudar potser a la dona que també podria estar bé.”

*J: Where nobody can hear you, where others can't see you, nothing... there it happens.(G1, 33:40 > 34:28)<sup>18</sup>*

### **Youth perception of gender roles and its relation with violence**

The students participating in the focus groups agreed that gender roles have changed considerably over the past couple of decades. This boy explains from his everyday experience and family dialogues how gender roles have changed in the last decades, especially the traditional requirements for women to stick to a certain behaviour, while now, both men and women, are supposed to have more rights and freedoms.

*It depends, because current society, I mean, the society which is now being created, the one of those who are now between 25 and 45 years old, they are people who have lived some things and have realized that everyone need to have their rights and freedoms, and all, as they want. For instance, at home it used to happen that my grandmother is always saying to my sister: "you are not a young lady". And my sister always gets angry, but of course, it is expected... well, it was expected from girls to be like ladies, much more than now, very concerned about their appearance all of them... and now, no, I mean, a woman has her own life and the man has his own life and everybody will become what he or she wants to. (G1, 37:02 > 38:13)<sup>19</sup>*

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<sup>18</sup> S: a la intimitat...

**A la intimitat?**

P: A casa

Sí?, Sí?, normalment és a casa... on no hi ha testimonis...

S: Sí

I quan per exemple hi ha una festa, o no sé, una festa de...

J: On no et puguin escoltar, o on no hi ha res que et puguin veure ni res... allà passa.

(G1, 33:40 > 34:28)

<sup>19</sup> Això és depèn, perquè ara la societat d'ara, o sigui, la societat que s'està creant ara, que diguem és la que, tx, em refereixo més que res a les persones que estan entre 25 i 45 anys, que tindrien ara, són persones que han viscut unes coses i que s'han donat compte que no, que les persones, o sigui, tots han de tenir els mateixos drets, i tots han de ser, han de tenir les seves llibertats, i tot lo que com vulguin, no?, com per exemple, a mi em passava a casa meva,

In the same direction, students in the focus groups defend that girls should have as much freedom as boys and that they should not be more concerned with becoming good wives and mothers but rather desire a professional or business career. So, boys and girls show egalitarian attitudes in relation to housework and in professional or business career. Despite these findings, students perceive gender roles have been also maintained in the sense that it is more acceptable for a boy than for a girl to have several sexual partners. Students stated that while it's socially accepted and valued as positive for boys to have casual encounters with different girls, girls are despised and considered unresponsive. In the next dialogue between two male students, they reflect on the difference consideration for boys and girls having sexual encounters. While the girl's reputation worsens, the boy's social perception improves.

*P: She appears like a bitch and the other... more...*

*G: It happens a lot*

*P: Yes, the fame of the boy is not the same as the girl's one. Reputation of the girl is like "see, she is so easy" and reputation of the man is like "wow, see this guy with so many he has been dating". Then it is not the same kind of popularity. (G1, 38:53 > 39:37)<sup>20</sup>*

Moreover, students consider that, although this type of violent behaviour remains in existence, there has been a change in the social status of gender violence that would be perceived more negatively by the whole society, and then it is hidden.

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*que a la meva germana la meva avia sempre li diu: "ai és que no ets una senyoreta", i la meva germana es cabreja sempre, però clar, s'espera de les noies abans s'esperava molt més que fossin molt senyoretas, molt coquetes totes, molt tal, i ara no, ara, o sigui, la dona té la seva vida i l'home té la seva vida i cadascú serà com ell vulgui ser.*

<sup>20</sup> *P: no, ella queda com una guarra i l'altre queda com un... més...*

*G: això passa molt*

*P: és que la fama del noi no és la mateixa que la de la noia. La de la dona és més de "mira que facilona" i la de l'home és més de "hòstia mira aquesta amb quantes ha sortit". Llavors no és el mateix tipus de popularitat. (G1, 38:53 > 39:37)*

*“I believe that during these two periods, the mentality changes. It is like now it is not considered correct, then if it happens, it is hidden. In the past it was more like: “Yes, I beat her”. But now, if he beats her it is not considered correct by the society and, I don’t know... it is more hidden than before” (G2, 12:31>12:52)<sup>21</sup>*

### **Information about gender violence**

In relation of the information and the reflection about gender violence, some students commented that they don’t speak about it among peers, but instead with family at home. Two students that they talk about gender violence as it appears on the news and media, while they are at home, but they hardly talk about it with friends.

***And do you speak about these cases ?***

*J: At home*

***At home, and also among you, among your friends, talk about it?***

*P: No*

*G: Few, really few times. [...]*

*J: I believe that at home is where it is mostly spoken. With your friends you talk about who you like, what have you done today, if we meet each other, ... much more this than... (G1, 14:15 > 14:50)<sup>22</sup>*

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<sup>21</sup> *la mentalitat canvia però és com que ara està mal vist, llavors si passa s’oculta. I abans és més: si le pego. Però ara si li pega està mal vist per la societat i no sé... s’oculta més.”*

<sup>22</sup> *I en parlo d'aquest casos?*

*J: A casa. A casa, i entre vosaltres, entre amics parlo? P: No. G: Poques, molt poques vegades [...]. J: Jo crec que on es parla més aquest cas és a casa, amb els amics parles, ah, de qui t’agrada, o que has fet avui, quedem?, més d’això que...*

## Youth perception of models of attraction

Finally, we explored the issue of attractiveness and desire in relation to violent male behaviours. Some of the interviewed female students recognize that it is usual to link desire to “bad guys” instead of to boys who shows friendly behaviours.

*“Many times, girls like the typical “bad guy” and they see the others only as Nice friends, who always will be there” (G2, 38:36>38:44)<sup>23</sup>*

Also, students conceive these kinds of boys as those being, in many cases, the most popular. A boy in one of the focus groups reflects about boys who exhibit behaviours of superiority and for this reason they are attractive to girls.

*It happens sometimes that there are some students in the high school or in any other one, that you see them, they just walk with an arrogant attitude, even if they go without girls, they go as if they were... the kings. And you them and they are just kids! And then, many girls like these guys, and really I can't understand. So, he just go there as if he was the most handsome, the cutest, and then it's nothing, you open and it's nothing (G1, 18:19 > 19:10)*

In fact, girls do often link a relationship with such a bad or violent boy to a social recognition and an improvement of their reputation. According to the students, some girls want to be with “bad boys” as it is a sign of having achieved a higher social status. Even if they are not sure about their feelings, the social pressure points them to being attracted by them.

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<sup>23</sup> “No sé, moltes vegades a les noies els hi agrada el típic chico malo i després a l'altre només el veu com el seu amic i com que l'altre sempre estarà allà.” (G2, 38:36>38:44)

*It is also possible in the case of women, that being with the worse boy and stronger, can be a sign of “I have achieved him and you don’t, I am here” (G2, 53:44>53:53)<sup>24</sup>*

*Thus, it is important the approval of people for being the popular and then, it is more for the acceptance of people of becoming more popular and cool, and maybe he is not that interesting for you but he is the popular person and you have to be after him, after him. (G1, 19:19 > 19:39)<sup>25</sup>*

As seen above in the section on gender stereotypes, the perception of casual encounters is not the same for boys than for girls. As students said, this attempt to achieve fame sometimes has a dual effect: while the girl believed to increase her status because she’s going out with the popular boy, the peer group criticises her and her social perception worsens. A young student talks about these perceptions.

*“Well, people talk. If a person, let’s say, that is not that popular hooks up, or any other thing with a popular guy, for certain time people talk about this new person. And this condition she wins it, although later she may be fiercely criticised, let’s say, the memory about her is still there and maybe she has gained a bad reputation.”<sup>26</sup> (G1, 20:30>20:56)*

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<sup>24</sup> “También puede que en las mujeres estar con el chico más malo y más fuerte, también, sea un signo de: yo lo he conseguido y tu no, yo estoy aquí.”

<sup>25</sup> Llavors, es important el que diu la gent per ser popular, es més per l’acceptació de ser més popular i guai, i potser no es gens interessant per tu, però es el més guai i has d’anar darrera d’ell.

<sup>26</sup> “Home, se’n parla. Si una persona que, diguem, que no és tan popular i s’enrotlla, o lo que sigui, amb un noi que és popular, durant un temps se’n parla d’aquesta persona. I aquesta condició se la guanya, i possiblement encara que després sigui degradada, diguem, o algo així, el record segueix estant i potser s’ha guanyat una mala fama.”

Moreover, it's observed that, according to the students, some **myths** related to gender violence survive in their current relationships. For example, two students, Anna and Jordi, reflect about the beliefs they had in their childhood in relation to the situation that if somebody insults you or hits you it's because he really loves you or if two people argue is because they desire each other. Anna, states that it's necessary to break down with those myths that link violence and points out the need to learn new ways of building relationships with others.

*ANNA: "This is the usual statement with children, if he calls you ugly and beats you is because he really loves you.*

*JORDI: Those who fight they actually desire each other.*

*ANNA: Yes, it seems that certain things do not evolve, and that it always ends up the same way. And when you are older, you have to learn to mingle with people, and stop doing silly things"*<sup>27</sup> (G2, 28:47>29:05)

To close the section on the reasons that lead to violence the students agreed that violence is never justified or necessary. In the focus group, a girl stated that respect between partners should prevail and violence can't be justified even if a couple is arguing.

*But I think that the question is that besides they like each other, they have to respect each other, because, a discussion it does not necessary have to end up with name calling or I don't know, I believe that...*<sup>28</sup> (G1, 9:48 >10:38)

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<sup>27</sup> ANNA: "És lo típic dels nens petits, si et diu lletja o et pega es perquè en veritat t'estima.

JORDI: *Quién se pelea se desea.*

ANNA: *Sí, parece que eso no evolucione y que siempre acabe siendo igual, i no. Cuando ya eres mayor tienes que aprender a saber relacionar-te con la gente. I no hacer el tonto."*

<sup>28</sup> Però jo crec que la qüestió és que encara que s'agradin es tenen que respectar, perquè, em, discutir no té perquè acabar amb insults, o, no sé, jo crec que és això...

#### 4. DISCUSSION

First, regarding youth **perceptions of gender violence definition**, through focus groups it is stated that teenagers present a broad definition that includes, in addition to physical violence, control among the partner, manipulation or emotional blackmailing. These data are consistent with the results of quantitative research because in the questionnaires, teenagers generally say not to accept behaviours such as a boy threatening or hitting his partner if she has been unfaithful or if she is constantly nagging or arguing. In addition, they consider unacceptable insulting the partner in front of others or threaten the other in order to achieve something. Other behaviour they consider unacceptable is that a boy pushes a girl into having sex if they have been dating or if he has spent a lot of money on her.

On youth **perceptions of gender roles**, referring to the aspects on gender equalities, boys and girls who participated in the research show egalitarian attitudes in diverse aspects of their daily life, such as equality in housework. This equality can also be seen in professional and educational areas, as the students think that girls and boys should have the same opportunities.

On the other hand, the results obtained reveal that in general, boys are more likely to have sporadic relationships based on the sexual encounters. In this way, students perceive that gender roles have been kept the same since these relationships are considered to be more acceptable for boys than for girls. Through the focus group, teenagers pointed out that while it's socially accepted and valued as positive for boys to have casual encounters with different girls, in the case of the girls is negatively perceived. Furthermore, in the quantitative study, there was a general agreement on the

statement that girls like to show off their bodies, therefore the adolescents' reproduction of sexist stereotypes continues.

Concerning youth perception about the **change of the gender roles and its link with gender violence**, in the focus group they said to believe that in recent decades there has been a change in gender roles, however, they don't observe this change in relation to gender violence. Teenagers have stated that today gender violence is socially rejected but they don't establish any link between the change in roles and the reduction of aggression.

Considering youth **awareness and knowledge of gender violence**, as we have seen, students declare they don't tolerate the main attitudes that indicate gender violence, such as threatening the partner, forcing the other into having sexual relations or hitting the partner if he or she has been unfaithful. Furthermore, both quantitative and qualitative studies indicate students agree violence is never justified or necessary.

Nevertheless, other behaviours can be found, such as setting limits to the places where one goes or accepting to shout at each other when arguing if it happens sometimes. The fact that the adolescents accept these attitudes is revealing as it shows how deeply incorporated these attitudes are in the youths' lives and to what extent they consider that these oppressive attitudes are acceptable for both partners independently from their sex.

Furthermore, the adolescents reproduce the existing **myths on gender violence in relationships**. To this regard it is noteworthy to mention that in the quantitative study they agree with the myth that jealousy is a proof of really caring for the partner. This leads to the idea that the adolescents, generally speaking, accept jealous attitudes by their partners and consider them a sign of love or faithfulness.

In this way, in a focus group, students stated that sometimes they have difficulty in determining which behaviours actually constitute violence. Moreover, it's said that in many cases abuses in relationships are difficult to detect by people or by the peer group because the aggressions often occur in the intimacy. As the students have mentioned, these difficulties to identify gender violence lead some youth to suffer violence in their relationships.

Deepening in the awareness teenagers have of the **profile** of who is more affected by violence, in the focus group students stated that girls are more exposed than boys to gender violence. This data contrast with the results extracted from the questionnaires because in the quantitative study students agree with the statement that women are just as likely to be violent toward their partners as men even though the answers differ from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree”.

Regarding the characteristics associated to the victim and the perpetrator, students think the **person who exercise violence** considers himself superior to women and he is unable to show his feelings and control his anger. In the focus group have been detected differences of opinion on whether violent behaviour is an innate feature or the result of socialization processes. While some claimed to be violent is a reaction that is attributed to one person's character, others said it depends on the interactions and the background.

On the **profile of the victim**, qualitative data emphasizes the idea that this person is considered to be timid and cowardly, people who forgive episodes of aggression and that consider that abuses like isolated cases.

In the questionnaires, a large number of students stated financial difficulties as the most common reason for problems that involve violence in relationships. This data differ from the focus group findings because in the fieldwork study students said gender

violence is not related to social class. Moreover, youth who participated in the focus group believe that there has been a change in the perception of age groups who suffer gender violence in recent times. As previously they have related gender violence to the adult population now they consider it as a problem that increasingly affects young people.

In relation to the **consequences of gender violence**, youth focus group participants have stated that it impacts both the individual level, leading to isolation and loss of social ties, and social levels because it produces hostility in the environment.

Another data to consider is that although teenagers have stated to believe violence is a problem that affects increasingly young people, it isn't a topic they talk about in their daily conversations within the peer group. They say to talk about gender violence at home with their families, but hardly ever among their group of friends.

Finally, we need to highlight the data in relation to the **youth perception of models of attraction**. An important fact that can be drawn from the data is the difference between quantitative and qualitative studies. In the data obtained from the questionnaires, students believe that ideas such as violent men are attractive or that women like violent men can never be defined as a reason to explain gender violence. This could reveal that adolescents don't associate attraction with a violent behaviour. However, in the focus group it has been detected that sometimes girls are attracted to boys who exhibit behaviours of superiority. These "bad boys", despite their behaviour, often achieve success and popularity and girls who are with them believe in the increase of their status. But this perception of upward mobility is not really true because teenagers say the perception of casual encounters is not the same for boys than for girls. As students say, this attempt to achieve fame sometimes has a dual effect: while the girl believed to

increase their status because she's going out with the popular boy, the peer group criticises her and her social perception worsens.

## **5. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

In conclusion, this study of quantitative and qualitative data on the attitudes on gender stereotypes and gender-based violence among youth in Spain portrays a reality in which gender violence is a severe social problem for which actions should be taken. Some legal measures have been implemented and further social and educational actions have to be further developed and put into practice.

This study reveals that many campaigns and programmes targeted to adolescents focus on the characteristics of affective and sexual relationships centring its efforts in promoting respect and equality and not considering in many of those educational programmes and educational initiatives the existing connections between violence and attractiveness. Only in research of recent years the focus of the prevention of gender-based violence has turned to this relationship, developing many actions under the line of preventive socialization of gender violence.

The overall quantitative results indicate that students do not have strong sexist attitudes on gender stereotypes but reveal certain sexist attitudes regarding sexual and affective behaviours of girls and boys, giving more freedom and power in those relationships to boys.

The qualitative results indicate that youth is aware of how gender roles have changed considerably over the past decades. Besides being aware of these advancements, the participants of the study recognise that it is still socially accepted and valued certain behaviours for boys and not for girls regarding affective and sexual relationships. In

addition students do not make any connection between the change in roles and the reduction of aggressions.

Finally an interesting contribution to point out with regards to gender violence is the unidentified relationship that the participating youth make between attractiveness and violent behaviours. Despite criticising and not accepting violence, girls have stated to feel attraction for “bad boys” whose behaviour is far from not violent and respectful.

The main recommendations are:

- That dialogue takes a central role on the educational programmes and educational experiences to raise awareness on gender-based violence, giving the opportunity to youth and teenagers to express their concerns and by means of egalitarian dialogues achieve common agreements, using their language and expressions.
- That the same youth and teenagers become qualified agents on fighting gender-based violence. By means of providing training and scientific data to students they become socialization agents for other students on preventing gender violence. Developing educational programmes on which the same students are the trainers for other students in the same educational institution and others, putting the resources and the knowledge on gender violence and its prevention to the availability of all students.

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