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Child-to-Parent Violence in the Spotlight: Thematic Analysis of Interviews with Parents Who Participated in the VÍNCULO Project of the University of Valencia

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Abstract

Child-to-parent violence has become one of the most important forms of violence at present, due to recent studies and the resulting awareness. Programmes such as VÍNCULO (BOND) assist parents seeking parenting guidance to manage this problem in the family. A complete study was carried out using mixed methods; however, the findings presented here are the result of an exclusively qualitative method due to the scope. We present thematic analysis of 10 interviews conducted with parents suffering from child-to-parent violence. Four supra-themes were analysed, two of which will be presented: the family environment and violent behaviour. The findings obtained reflect a lack of communication between parents and their adolescent children, where verbal and/or psychological violent behaviour are predominant. The essential key point of the project consists in developing emotional connections in the family relationship to strengthen the affective bond. The desperate situation that these families experience is the result of the negative interconnections between an inappropriate parenting style, broken emotional bond and, on many occasions, the perpetuation of a cycle of violence as a normalised relational style.

Keywords: child-to-parent violence, family, parenting style, affective bond, parental intervention.

1. Introduction

The family constitutes the basic social nucleus for living together and both its structure and the relationships produced within it are essential for the correct bio-psycho-social development of each of its members. Minuchin and Fishman (1997) describe the family as the natural group that establishes patterns of interaction over time and which leads to conservation and evolution. It is society's cell group; an institution that has existed throughout history and has always shared the same functions, such as the upbringing of children, survival and common union between its

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members. It is not a static entity but is rather in constant change, just like the social contexts surrounding it.

The family can be an affective space for living together, protection and meeting children's needs, or, on the other hand, it can become a source of conflict and risks, in the form of abandonment of any other type of physical, psychological, emotional or sexual abuse (Aroca et al., 2012). Thus, what takes place within the family context will have a decisive influence on the lives of its members (Cánovas, Sahuquillo, 2014).

Therefore, the family constitutes the most important support system for adolescents' wellbeing and adjustment, as it is the most immediate context for their personal development. However, it has also been analysed as a source of possible risk factors, since the quality of the relationships between parents and children represents one of the most notable predictor variables of antisocial behaviour in adolescent children (Musitu et al., 2006; Lozano et al., 2013).

When child-to-parent violence is understood as the result of the interaction between the different members of the family system, analysing it requires an ecosystemic relational approach (Peligero, 2016; Pereira, 2011). This takes into consideration intrapersonal factors, such as family functioning factors and cultural and community influences.

With regard to family environment, previous studies have established the existence of a relationship between problems of violent behaviour during adolescence and the presence of frequent and intense family conflicts (Gámezm, Calvete, 2012; Ibabe, Jaureguizar, 2011; Tobeña, 2012). Child-to-parent violence develops in a cycle of coercion between the abusive child and the victim, which has been defined as the circle of child-to-parent violence (Aroca, 2010). This cycle consists in a process where the use of violence, not only physical, is threatened with the aim of conditioning the behaviour of the members of the family nucleus.

Different studies show a series of family factors that cause child-to-parent violence to appear in the family. The first of these refers to a history of family violence and its use as a way to resolve conflict. The assumption of violence as a way of relating and/or resolving conflicts from an early age can cause children to reproduce the mechanisms that they have learned in order to solve problems that they may encounter over their life cycle (Calvete, Orue, 2011; Routt, Anderson, 2011).

As Martínez et al. (2015) highlight in their study, the variable "being a witness to violence in the family" shows that 50 % to 60 % of children who have witnessed this abuse show aggressive behaviour towards their parents. This factor is closely linked to the intergenerational theory of violence described previously. Thus, it is important to note that having been exposed to highly conflictive family situations, both directly and indirectly, may be considered a risk factor.

Another family factor included in the scientific evidence (Aroca, Cánovas, 2012; Ibabe et al., 2007) refers to the parenting styles used by parents when raising their children. Parenting styles are a compendium of attitudes, behaviour and non-verbal expressions that characterise the nature of the relationships between parents and children in different situations. The combination of high and low levels of affection and control enables four parenting styles to be defined: authoritarian, authoritative, permissive and neglectful (Baumrind, 1971; Maccoby, Martin, 1983).

With regard to child-to-parent violence and parenting styles, Etxebarria et al. (2009) show that there has been a profound transformation of relationships between parents and children in recent years. These relationships are increasingly symmetrical and can be associated with a significant change in the hierarchy of power within the family system (Martínez et al., 2015). Parental socialisation styles have therefore been identified as precedents to aggression between children and parents.

In accordance with these recent changes in parenting styles, it is thought that child-to-parent violence may stem from parents' inability to establish limits on their children's behaviour and set consequences according to this behaviour. In the words of Calvete et al. (2014), child-to-parent violence represents a specific disturbance of the traditional relationships of power, through which adolescents try to control and gain power over family members.

2. Method
2.1. Design
The VÍNCULO project began as an initiative of the University of Valencia to respond to emerging social demand with regards to CPV. It is a free public resource offered by the University Institute of Creativity and Educational Innovation of the University of Valencia and aimed at all

families who need support to manage situations of family violence. It helps parents who suffer recurrent physical and/or psychological violence from their adolescent children.

The specialised assistance offered specifically provides guidance on matters of parenting, aiming to prevent conflicts. Moreover, it suggests new strategies to redirect violent actions in the family. It excludes any type of therapy or clinical psychological treatment for users (both parents and children). To guarantee this line of action, three criteria are stipulated which must be to be met by all families who make use of the service:

1. No legal proceedings have been initiated due to an accusation of CPV.
2. No proceedings for treatment have been initiated by social services.
3. Children must be between 12 and 17 years old.

2.2. Participants

The sample consisted of a total of ten cases compiled between April and December 2019. The families contacted the VÍNCULO project to seek help as they had identified emerging aggressive behaviour in their children.

2.3. Evaluation tools

The main qualitative technique in this study was the use of semi-structured interviews, through which information about the families and adolescent children was gathered in order to understand the current problems of CPV. As the sessions were registered and recorded, it was possible to transcribe the content of the interviews so as to subsequently study them in detail. The complexity of child-to-parent violence and the different factors that contribute to this problem make it necessary for mixed methods to be used, as through this, a wider, deeper and more holistic perspective of the phenomenon studied can be gained, thus reaching greater interpretive wealth. However, due to space, the results presented here come from exclusively qualitative data, due to their scope.

Semi-structured interviews were used as the tool to collect qualitative information and this was analysed and coded through thematic analysis. A personal data collection form for the parents providing general information was used as the tool to gather socio-demographic information about the families. Together with this, a form was developed *ad hoc* to register the violence carried out by the adolescent children, which consisted of different variables relating to the violent behaviour and the type of response given by the parents to these situations.

2.4. Procedure

After the families had contacted the University of Valencia and given their informed consent to participate in the project, they were assisted in a structured way through four phases. The first consisted in initial contact with the parents through a semi-structured interview. All the available information was compiled in addition to socio-demographic data and psychometric tests. In the second, an interview was held with the adolescents (in the event that they voluntarily agreed to participate), who gave their view of the conflict and also completed psychometric tests.

Once the information about the case had been collected, the team of professionals assessed the situation according to the evidence obtained. Feedback was given to parents in the third phase, where they were provided with tools and parenting advice. The last phase consisted in exhaustive monitoring of the users to establish the progress made, or failing this, the need to repeat the procedure.

2.5. Data analysis

In this study, qualitative data (proceeding from the semi-structured interviews) was collected and analysed through thematic analysis. The qualitative data was processed and analysed using thematic analysis (Braun, Clarke, 2006) developed through the different phases and sequences that structure this process of analysis.

Phase 1: Familiarisation with the data and information

In this first phase, the transcriptions of all of the semi-structured interviews were carried out and the available material was reread. This makes it possible to look for structures, patterns and meanings that underlie the discourse of the parents participating in the study.

Phase 2: Creation of categories and initial codes

The second phase focuses on the information coding process. This process was carried out taking into account the following recommendations suggested by Braun & Clarke (2006):

- As many patterns as possible should be coded in the information.

- Enough information should be incorporated into each code so as not to lose perspective of the context.

- It is considered possible to code the same data extract more than once.

The result led to 136 semantic content codes (succinct summaries of the explicit content) being obtained, reflecting possible tendencies and groups of information. The coding process was carried out manually, which allowed our own data matrix to be designed from which it would be possible to work in subsequent phases and within which all of the fragments of text that led to the creation of the identified semantic codes were collected.

Phase 3: Search for themes

This phase is defined by classifying and grouping the different codes obtained previously, giving them shape and meaning. Throughout this phase, relationships between codes are looked for, resulting in the themes and different levels among them (supra-themes and themes), as reflected in Table 1.

Table 1. Supra-themes and themes extracted through thematic analysis

Family environment	- Relationships with parents, siblings, extended and/or close family - Family intervention as support for the problem - People respected by the child - Family problems stemming from the conflict
Violent behaviour	- Type, frequency and intensity of behaviour - Profile of the victim - Place where the violent behaviour occurs - Evolution of the violent behaviour - Most serious incidents remembered - Response to situations of conflict (by the child and parents)

Phase 4: Review of themes

A comprehensive review of the supra-themes, themes and codes previously grouped together was carried out. Due to this, during this phase a set of codes (n = 12) was detected which did not seem to belong to any theme. Therefore, they were eliminated from this study in order to be able to develop them in later research.

Phase 5: Definition and naming of themes

This phase did not lead to any modifications of what had already been established in phase 4, as there were no variations in the definitions of the supra-themes and themes. Likewise, the semantic codes remained in the groups defined in previous phases.

Phase 6: Production of the write-up

The final phase described by Braun & Clarke (2006) refers to the findings obtained following the thematic analysis, thus building a narrative supported by the argument that results from understanding and interpreting the collected information. For the individualised evaluation of the cases, it was essential to have all the information from a range of sources available for sufficient data triangulation to be plausible.

3. Results

The results obtained following thematic analysis showed different thematic groups related to child-to-parent violence and the different spectrums that the phenomenon in question reaches. These are linked to the family environment (ST1) and violent behaviour (ST2).

Firstly, each of the supra-themes will be analysed in relation to the themes and codes that it encompasses, thus indicating the relevance (frequency and percentage) that each of these aspects has in the discourse of the participants interviewed. Secondly, the relationships and connections that exist between the different themes of each supra-theme will be addressed. As has been previously indicated, all of these are interrelated and give shape to the problem of child-to-parent violence, thus making it more complex.

ST1. Family environment

The thematic analysis of this supra-theme revealed the importance of family dynamics and the relationships developed within this system. This information is shown in Table 2, where the frequency and percentage of each of the codes extracted from the analysis of the interviews (n = 10) is presented.

Table 2. Frequency and % of the codes specific to the 'family environment' supra-theme

Codes	F	(%)
Relationships with parents, siblings, extended and/or close family		
Communication problems between the parents and child (Code 1)	10	100
Pejorative labels or value judgements given to parents by the child. (Code 2)	8	80
Parents indicate a series of the child's attributes and characteristics (Code 3)	6	60
Unity between the mother and child when facing situations of confrontation with the father. (Code 4)	2	20
Positive affective relationships between the child and other family members (Code 5)	4	40
Accounts of episodes of violence and abuse towards the child carried out by the father (Code 6)	3	30
The mother reacts in a protective way against the father's abuse of the child (Code 7)	3	30
The mother's emotional dependency on the child (Code 7)	5	50
The relationship between the parents and child becomes colder and more distant over time (Code 9)	10	100
The child constantly states that they do not want to have any contact with the father, breaking their relationship with him (Code 10)	2	20
Family intervention as support for the problem		
The mother considers the child's father to be absent and so not have a complete understanding of their violent behaviour (Code 11)	5	50
Relatives to whom parents turn for help in order to decrease family conflict (Code 12)	4	40
Lack of family and social support networks (Code 13)	6	60
The child's sister provides parents with support within the family system (Code 14)	4	40
People respected by the child		
Absence of people respected by the child and considered to be role models (Code 15)	5	60
The child considers the grandparents to be a role model and figure of authority. They accept their rules and there is no expression of violence towards them (Code 16)	2	30
Aunts and/or uncles are the only role model that the child respects (Code 17)	1	10
Family problems stemming from the conflict		
Moments of family leisure are brief and limited (Code 18)	10	100
Parents highlight problems in the family life cycle and marital subsystem due to the child's behaviour (Code 19)	5	50

With regard to theme 1 "relationship with parents, siblings, extended and/or close family", one of the aspects of special importance when compared with the others was that of

"communication problems between the parents and child (Code 1)". The participants noted the need to resolve conflicts with their children in a positive way. In other words, conflicts should be used to create a space between what is desirable (for the child) and acceptable (for the parent), in such a way that an area of agreement and consensus is reached. Despite this, all the parents interviewed stated that they could not meet this need, thus finding themselves faced with a family reality where communication is made impossible during times of conflict.

"Didn't you want to talk?" And I say, "Ok, sure." We start to talk, then he comes out for dinner, suddenly something gets to him and he gets angry again and goes to his room (…) So then he stops talking to me, this happens all the time, and it can go on for two or three days (PV001).

Furthermore, this aspect is intrinsically linked to the code "pejorative labels and value judgements given to parents by the child (Code 2)" and with the code "the relationship between the parents and child becomes colder and more distant over time (Code 9)". Both originate in the context of communication problems, difficulty to resolve conflict in an assertive way and the use of verbal violence as a tool utilised in the power struggle within the family system.

80 % of participating parents revealed that the relationship between themselves and the child became increasingly distant and cold over time. The parents noted that in many cases it was the child who said that they did not want to spend time with them or the rest of the family, adopting an attitude of isolation.

Now it's not that he doesn't spend time with me, or with his aunt, or his two cousins, who haven't done anything to him. They come by and he doesn't say hi… Now, it's that he doesn't eat. He hasn't eaten with the family for three years (…) Just like that, he doesn't celebrate Christmas, birthdays, not even my niece's christening with the family… Nothing (PV006).

He takes a long time to eat dinner, because he wants to eat dinner alone, have lunch alone, look at his phone and avoid us (PV007).

Communication problems, tied to the latent violence in the family environment, hinder the possibility of the parts involved being emotionally reconciled with each other. The analysis indicates that 80 % of the families participating in the study have lived with constant conflicts in which the "pejorative labels and value judgements given the parents by the child (Code 2)" become especially relevant through the use of insults, threats and humiliation.

Look, her exact words (referring to what the child says), "Get out of my life, die, I hope you get run over, I hope you get raped, die." I said, "You don't know what you're saying" and she answered, "It's what I feel and what I want, bitch, whore, die. I know you think that I'm saying it because I'm angry, but the only thing I want is for you to know what it's like to have a hard time." I'm convinced that she wants (…) me to feel the pain that she feels (PV009).

In these situations, the parents state that they do not know how to handle the messages of hate expressed by their children when they argue. 60 % of participating mothers and fathers indicate "a series of the child's attributes and characteristics (Code 3)". The attributes assigned depict a violent, controlling child with the ability to manipulate situations through the use of affection or contempt/aggression as they see fit. Furthermore, the child is immature and shows regressive tendencies in their childish behaviour, as well as finding it difficult to manage emotions and make use of assertive techniques to solve problems.

I had to say three positive things about him, three things about his characteristics, something, and it was really hard to find them because I was so angry about what he was doing to us (PV002).

Some of the informants referred to the search for "positive affective relationships with other family members (Code 5)", especially when spending leisure time together. The analysis of the interviews reveals that 40 % of children try to maintain affective bonds with a family member, thus establishing a type of connection that keeps them connected to their environment and allows them to feel part of the family reality.

Look, he usually gets on very well with his sister and they support each other a lot, he always asks his sister for advice. If he has to buy some trousers he'll say, "Well you buy them for me or whatever my sister says." (PV002)

I also have to say that there are some lovely moments when he looks for harmony. For example, last night the three siblings were together in the bedroom before going to sleep (PV003).

The interviews reflected the importance of intergenerational transmission of violence. In three of the families that participated in the study, the children developed violent behaviour towards their mother and siblings after having been exposed to gender-based violence within the family. For this reason, 30 % of families mentioned an "account of episodes of violence and abuse towards the child carried out by the father (Code 6)" in their interviews, while also explaining how "the mother reacts protectively against with the father's abuse of the child (Code 7)". Violence learned in childhood should be considered as a risk factor, given that it can affect the recurrence of violence, understood as second-generation violent behaviour.

It should be noted that in 30% of cases where gender violence existed in the home, and where the child had also been directly and indirectly exposed to such violence, the mother adopted an overprotective parenting style towards the child, as shown in code 7. The interviewed mothers stated that they felt the need to convey all the affection that their children had been denied, leading to emotional dependence. This encourages heteronomy, at the expense of the individual autonomy of both the child and the mother herself.

I have a very strong bond with my son, an umbilical cord that feels like it hasn't been cut and I don't want to cut it. I don't know why. (...) Another time I said to him, "Put your socks on, darling" and he answered, "Damn it, how hard is it? You put them on for me", and as his mum, I was there, as I could, trying to put on his socks" (PV004).

I was completely (...) devoted, devoted to his wellbeing and to everything going well for him. (PV003)

With regard to the analysis of the "unity between the mother and child when facing situations of confrontation with the father. (Code 4)" code and the "child constantly states that they do not want to have any contact with the father, breaking their relationship with him (Code 10)", it is important to note that both were mentioned by 20 % of participating families.

In both cases, they were mentioned by two of the three mothers who had been victims of gender-based violence. In times of family conflict, the children created a non-agreed alliance against the father. Once the divorce process had been carried out, the children did not want to maintain any kind of contact with their father.

He says that his father is dead to him, and that he doesn't have a father (PV006).

The first year their father didn't let me come near them, it was like I didn't exist for the week they were with him. In fact, the boy still knows when he's with him, and he already knows because he's told him, which things they do with their father and not with their mother (PV003).

In theme 2, 60 % of participants highlighted that they had not felt supported by their family, emphasising the "lack of family and social support networks (Code 13)". As a result of this, they needed external support to be able to distance themselves from the problem. In this regard, 50 % of mothers considered "the child's father to be absent and so not have a complete understanding of their child's violent behaviour (Code 11)", as the mothers are the ones in charge of their children's care and spend the most time with them.

Theme 2 is closely related to theme 3 "people respected by the child". 30 % of informants mentioned that the grandparents were figures of respect and authority for the child (Code 16), as were uncles/aunts in 10 % of cases. These results suggest that 60 % of children with violent behaviour lack people they respect in the family environment.

Finally, theme 4 addresses "family problems stemming from the conflict", which is represented by three codes. On the one hand, all the participants highlighted "the few moments of leisure time that the family share and which enrich relationships between the members of the system (Code 18)", implying a loss of positive and meaningful experiences with the whole family which help lower the high level of conflict. On the other hand, 50 % of parents stated that they had felt that the child's behavioural problems were affecting the correct development of the family life cycle, especially the marital subsystem (Code 19).

I said, "Well, let's go out for lunch or go for a hike". For a long time I said, "Hey, now you're doing something related to hiking, lets go for a walk in the mountains. We'll go anywhere you want" (PV001).

ST2. Violent behaviour

The analysis of the interview points to a great number of codes full of experiences and meanings regarding the violence that parents have suffered at the hands of their children, giving shape to this matter.

Table 3. Frequency and % of the codes specific to the "violent behaviour" supra-theme

Codes	F	(%)
Type, frequency and intensity of behaviour. Profile of the victim		
There are numerous and continuous conflictive situations caused by the child's violent behaviour towards their parents (Code 20)	10	100
The child releases their violence and aggression on the home furnishings (Code 21)	5	50
Physical violence carried out by the child towards their parents (Code 22)	6	60
Psychological violence carried out by the child towards their parents (Code 23)	9	90
Verbal violence expressed by the child towards their parents (Code 24)	10	100
Parents state that the child steals small quantities of money from them (code 25)	3	30
Parents state that the child has a gaming addiction and this causes an increase in their violent behaviour towards the members of the family system (Code 26)	7	70
The mother and younger sister are the main victims of child-to-parent violence (Code 27)	10	100
Evolution of the violent behaviour		
There is a positive change in the child's attitude following an increase in the parents' affective nearness (Code 28)	4	40
Dynamic cycle of violence (violent phases vs balanced phases) (Code 29)	7	70
The violent behaviour began in childhood with small outbursts of anger, and escalated over the years towards violent behaviour (Code 30)	8	80
Parents state that they did not realise how much their child's violent behaviour was increasing (Code 31)	2	20
Most serious incidents remembered		
Serious episodes of physical and verbal violence between the father and child (Code 32)	3	30
Arguments between the child and parents in which verbal violence plays an important part (Code 33)	10	10
The child throws a piece of furniture at the parents while insulting and threatening them (Code 34)	3	30
Response to situations of conflict (by the child and parents)		
Parents feel overwhelmed by the situation with the child (Code 35)	7	70
When parents express any physical violence during a conflict the child reacts extremely violently (Code 36)	7	70
Parents try to make the child reflect on the gravity of his or her actions (Code 37)	5	50
When the child reflects on their violent behaviour, they show regret and express affection towards the family members involves (Code 38)	6	60
The child states that they not feel remorse for the violent actions carried out against their parents (Code 39)	4	40

Parents tend to act as though their child's violent behaviour never happened, denying the reality that they are experiencing.	3	30
Parents resort to physical or verbal violence when they do not know how to manage conflicts with their child (Code 41)	7	70

Theme 5 refers to the "type, frequency and intensity of behaviour and profile of the victims" and is shown in Table 3. From this analysis, it is been possible to outline a family scenario subject to constant family conflicts (Code 20), which stem from the different expressions of violent behaviour carried out by the children towards their parents.

All of the participants stated that they had felt immersed in a damaged family reality. The participants stated that they had felt like victims, both directly and indirectly, of their children's violence, which took on different forms (physical, psychological, verbal and against the home furnishings). With regard to "verbal violence expressed by the child towards their parents (Code 24)", it is important to note that all those interviewed admitted to having experienced it over the years. The data extracted from the analysis of the interviews reveal that verbal aggression is the type that is most prevalent over time.

He says to me, "You fat bitch, I hope you die. I'm going to spit on your grave, I'm going to dance on your grave", and in the evening he's giving me kisses. And another time when he wanted me to help him get dressed, when I told him he was too old for it he shouted, "Put them on for me, damn it! You're disgusting, put them on! (PV004)

Well, for example, he went on to say, "*You're shitty parents*", "*I hope you die soon.*" (PV007)

Another expression of child-to-parent violence mentioned by family members is related to "psychological violence carried out by the child towards their parents (Code 23)", which is found in 90 % of cases. This type of violence is connected to constant threats, manipulation, emotional blackmail, coercion and intimidation. In the same way, 60 % of the key participants also said that they had suffered physical violence from the child (Code 22).

She's hurt me if I didn't do what, if she wanted to go out and I didn't let her. Then she'd hit me so I'd let her go. One of the times when she hit me I said, "I'm going to have to call the police if you don't stop hitting me." (PV009).

I don't remember what it was about (...) in one of those outbursts that he had, he punched me two or three times on my chest and then once on my forehead, that one really hurt me. (PV010)

The different expressions of violence described by the participants always arise when the child is denied something that they want immediately or in the short term, putting their needs before those of the other family members. This behaviour appears as a tool to obtain what they want. It is important to note that half of the parents (50 %) also said that when the child is not in control of the situation or when they denied something that they want to get, this leads to an "release of violence and aggression on the home furnishings (Code 21)", leaving significant physical damage on the walls or furniture of the home.

My son's destroyed the house twice. He's smashed the TV (...) he's broken a picture. One day he picked up a knife and broke one of those pictures with a print of New York (...) He destroyed it, he kicked it (PV004).

He's got a lot of anger and, lately, he gets it out by hitting himself against the doors and the walls (PV006).

One of the codes that was of special importance regarding violent behaviour refers to gaming addictions (Code 26), which are present in 70 % of the children included in the sample.

Yes, but his addiction doesn't just end with gaming. You try to take away his mobile or the computer and that's when he gets violent (PV003).

She's always on her phone and you can't take it off her (...) I've tried sometimes, but I haven't been able to. When I've got angry and tried to take her mobile away, she's got really aggressive. She hasn't hit me but she gets really defensive and tries to stop me from taking her phone (PV008).

Furthermore, 30 % of the participants in the study stated that they had been victims of small thefts carried out by their child (Code 25). This was due to the fact that the parents refused to give

them money when they demanded it through shouting, insults and threats. These thefts occurred when the victims were not home, so physical violence was not used to get what they wanted to take.

A year ago, he bought several things with my cards, with his father's cards and, as we took them all away from him (…) he started to steal money that we had at home (PV003).

The analysis of the interviews reveals that "the mother and younger sister are the main victims of child-to-parent violence (Code 27)" in 100 % of the cases included in the sample.

He directly insults his siblings (…) and he said to one of them "hey, you're an idiot, you don't have any friends, you're a loser". He also always knows how to attack where it hurts the most and he has a special ability (…) a special instinct to attack when you can't defend yourself (PV005).

The participants' discourse shows that the mother and younger siblings are always the main object of the child's violence. They are the ones who usually invest the most time in their children and adopt the role of carer. This gives them greater responsibility in the upbringing of their children and they frequently feel guilty about their bad behaviour.

In theme 6, the "evolution of violent behaviour" carried out by the child over the years, 70 % of participants noted that the "the cycle of violence is dynamic (Code 29)", given that violent episodes are interspersed with moments of harmony and balance in the family, even though they do not last long. This dynamic has been defined as the circle of child-to-parent violence, given that it does not correspond to isolated events, but rather follows a pattern.

He knows how to lead you into a trap, into his circle of traps. So, if he says, "You're a loser" in front of everyone and you don't say anything, he sees it as though you're making him look stupid. If he hits us it's worse because it's in front of everyone (…) so he takes you to situations where he can close you in no matter what you do (PV005).

In this cycle of child-to-parent violence, 80 % of parents stated that "the violent behaviour began in childhood with small outbursts of anger, and escalated over the years towards violent behaviour (Code 30)", now reaching a level that they do not know how to manage or stop. A large number of parents did state that they were aware of the evolution of their child's behaviour over the years, while 20 % of mothers and fathers included in the study stressed that they did not realise how much their child's violent behaviour was increasing (Code 31)". Moreover, only 40 % of participants reported a "positive change in the child's attitude following an increase in the parents' affective nearness (Code 28)". This is an important aspect that indicates that it is possible to reduce the children's level of violence.

Theme 7 addresses "the most serious incidents remembered". The predominant type is verbal (Code 33), which is shared among all participants. Moments of extreme physical violence between the child and one of the parents (Code 32), where a lack of self-control and uncontrolled anger is expressed through hitting are also noted. Such episodes of violence occurred in 30 % of cases. In another 30 % of cases, the violence carried out by children was directed towards furniture (Code 30) by trying to break and destroy objects of emotional value for the family members.

Lastly, the importance of the "response to situations of conflict" (theme 8) was reinforced. On the one hand, 70 % of parents indicated that they felt overwhelmed by the situation with their child (Code 35), given that they did not have the resources or skills to manage it. The informants noted different responses to violent conflicts, as 50 % of parents used physical punishment and verbal violence to end family conflict or when they do not know how to manage the problem (Code 42), while 50% of the cases also tried to make the child reflect on their violent actions (Code 37).

I tried to make some things clear, and well, it was a disaster of a day. But I don't know how it happened, but since then he's started to change his attitude. The change was incredible after only a few days and it's carried on. The problem where he would start to raise his voice over any little thing doesn't happen anymore and I don't even feel so much contempt in his words (PV001).

It is important to note that when the parents show any expression of violence during conflict with their child, he or she reacts more violently towards them (Code 36). Thus, there is an escalation of feelings of hate/anger in the child and frustration from the parents, as they do not know how to correctly manage the situation and heighten the latent problem.

Sometimes I hit him when we were arguing and he hit be back afterwards. And I said, *"Why are you hurting me?"* and he said, *"If you can hit me, I'm going to hit too"*. And I also remember that when he punched me hard, I'd slapped him at the beginning of the argument for something he'd said that had really hurt me (PV010).

Finally, the parents stated that, in 60 % of cases, the children had shown regret for the actions committed (Code 39); while in the remaining 40 % they stated that they did not feel any remorse for the different types of violence used during discussions. 30 % of parents indicated that when the family conflict had finished, they acted as though the violent actions committed by the child had never happened. This reaction creates an illusion of the reality in which the family are living, using avoidance and lack of acceptance as a strategy to try to separate themselves from the violence they are experiencing.

4. Discussion

As has already been said, the family is understood to be the most important agent of socialisation in the bio-psycho-social development of its members; especially in the earliest stages of life. In fact, the family constitutes the essential nucleus for the socialisation of children. While the family is the setting in which first interactions are developed, these can be both positive and negative. They all affect the dynamics and tendencies of the family towards functionality or dysfunction, in which parenthood, parenting styles and conflict resolution are influential.

Child-to-parent violence, understood as violent behaviour where the main victims are parents, is considered to be a complex phenomenon, since multiple aspects of relational dynamics converge. The exertion of violence does not have only one cause, but is rather formed by a complex, multifaceted issue with multiple causes, which can only be understood from ecological approach that considers both intrapersonal variables and aspects of family functioning and cultural and community influences (Pereira, 2011). Social and cultural changes occurring in recent years have influenced the presence and development of child-to-parent violence in the home. One of the factors commonly mentioned is the transformation of a normative hierarchy based on the authority of the parents into a horizontal position. In other words, it becomes parenting based on democracy (Pereira, 2011).

The most significant results of the analysis of each supra-theme will be presented below. On the one hand, in the family environment, importance is given to communication problems between parents and adolescent children together with pejorative value judgements in conflicts from both sides involved. This can be seen in all cases, and for this reason it can be considered to be widespread. The parents highlighted the need to create spaces for communication in which affection and positive life experiences between family members take precedence. In comparison with the previous point, the presence of learned bidirectional violence is found, which is connected to a family history prone to episodes of gender-based violence. There are many cases (40 % of the sample) in which children have been exposed to some kind of violence in the family, which in turn has been accentuated by the lack of family and community support networks. From the sample analysed, children who have been exposed to this situation have developed more violent relational mechanisms and lack the necessary tools to manage conflicts assertively. The absence of the father figure and lack of shared leisure time were also of particular relevance in the participants' discourse.

On the other hand, with regard to the results concerning the children's violent behaviour, it is important to highlight the main victims of this violence as well as its typology. The analysis shows that violence is mainly carried out against mothers. In relation to this, while violence appears in all types of families (single-parent, reconstituted, adoptive, nuclear or foster), it is single-parent families that constitute a decisive risk factor for the appearance of CPV. In fact, this has been seen in the cases examined here, especially mothers in single-parent families. The risk factors linked to the abuse of mothers have been summarised, and established in this study, as the following: parenting habits characterised by irritability, insufficient intra-family communication, poor parental control and supervision, coercive practices, lack of affection, few, non-existent or inconsistent rules and limits and low levels of family cohesion (Ibabe et al., 2009). This study has shown that the mother is the person most frequently attacked by children, given that she is the carer and main (and sometimes only) parent, which contributes to the appearance of confrontations.

Another of the most noted aspects was the type of violence carried out by the children, by which we refer to verbal or psychological violence and violence towards the home furnishings. All the children verbally attacked their parents, 90 % used psychological violence while 60 % also used physical violence. Releasing violence and aggression on furnishings was not insignificant (prevalent in 50 % of cases). Gaming addictions and the consumption of narcotics generated violent reactions in children when deprived of something they wanted. For this reason, it is not surprising that the reverse hierarchy previously referred to is linked to the purpose of attaining

their objectives (greater control over purchases, money, the use of new technologies etc.) through the use of violence.

The studies reviewed together with the present research indicate that permissiveness, negligence and the absence of the father figure are constantly found in abusive children. CPV directly correlates to parenting practices that fail to encourage the child's emotional and social adjustment, essential for their correct development (Aroca et al., 2014). Moreover, learned violent is understood to be a vicarious form of learning from observation and in the cases that have been monitored, a boomerang effect has been established where children who have been attacked at some stage in their lives have responded in the same way, as they have assimilated violence as a way of relating. In short, the essential key point shown by the VÍNCULO project is the development of a stable, positive and long-tasting affective bond, which that has been developed with the families who use this service in order to equip them with the necessary resources. Thus, the aim of the parenting and social guidance and advice provided has been to enable parents to handle this situation from a conscious and educated perspective and to develop the attitudes and skills needed to face the problems that concern them.

The main limitation of this study is found in the unilateral nature of the information. The parents were the ones who sought help, due to which, in the majority of cases, the children did not consider there to be a problem and were not prepared to share their view of the situation. From the above, there are clear prospects for the future: we must continue to work to reach more families and ensure that the children involved are aware and actively participate so as to obtain more complete and exhaustive information on each of the cases in question. Furthermore, in subsequent studies we aim to look in more depth at other supra-themes of great interest, which have not been possible to cover here owing to a lack of space, and which could shine light on the state of the matter.

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