

## Couples violence among teenagers students from public high schools of North Lima

## Violencia de pareja en adolescentes estudiantes de colegios estatales de Lima Norte

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### Abstract

**Objective:** Determine the frequency of partner violence among teenager students of state high schools in a district of North Lima. **Materials and methods:** Cross-sectional descriptive study conducted in five state high schools at Puente Piedra district. The instrument used was the Conflict Questionnaire in teenager relationships (CQTR). **Results:** Of the 208 teenagers (Mean = 15.48, SD = 0.99, Range: 14 to 18), 59.6% (n = 124) corresponded to the male sex and the female, most of them were from the third and fourth year. Almost all the teenagers have committed or suffered some type of violence; emotional verbal violence was the most frequent in both groups. The violence committed, in its relational violence dimension, occurred in a greater proportion in male teenagers [p = 0.045; OR = 2.52 (95% CI: 1.01-6.33)]. Violence committed in the threat dimension also occurred in a greater proportion in males [p = 0.002; OR = 8.15 (95% CI: 1.71-38.87)]. The violence suffered, in the verbal emotional dimension, threat and physical violence was presented in greater proportion in male teenagers, with significant differences in verbal violence [p = 0.04; OR = 2.45 (1.99-3.02)], threat [p = 0.001; OR = 14.55 (95% CI: 1.78-118.58)] and in physical violence [p = 0.009; OR = 4.46 (95% CI: 1.34-14.86)]. **Conclusion:** The violence committed and suffered in teenager couples is frequent and occurs mainly in males, the emotional verbal component and the threat predominated. It is recommended to strengthen the work of both the education and health sector to contribute to the reduction of violence.

**Keywords:** intimate partner violence; teenager; students; Peru (Source: MeSH, NLM).

### Resumen

**Objetivo:** determinar la frecuencia de violencia de pareja en los adolescentes estudiantes de los colegios estatales de un distrito de Lima Norte. **Materiales y métodos:** estudio descriptivo transversal realizado en cinco colegios estatales del distrito de Puente Piedra. El instrumento utilizado fue el cuestionario de conflictos en las relaciones de pareja en adolescentes (CADRI). **Resultados:** de 208 adolescentes (Media=15,48; DE=0,99; Rango: 14 a 18), el 59,6% (n=124) correspondió al sexo masculino y el resto femenino, en su mayoría cursaban el tercero y cuarto año. Una alta proporción de los adolescentes han cometido o sufrido algún tipo de violencia, la violencia verbal emocional tuvo predominio en ambos grupos. La violencia cometida, en su dimensión violencia relacional se presentó en mayor proporción en los adolescentes varones [p=0,045; OR=2,52 (IC95%: 1,01-6,33)]. La violencia cometida en la dimensión amenaza, también se presentó en mayor proporción en los varones [p=0,002; OR=8,15 (IC95%: 1,71-38,87)]. La violencia sufrida, en la dimensión verbal emocional, amenaza y violencia física se presentó en mayor proporción en los adolescentes varones, con diferencias significativas en la violencia verbal emocional [p=0,04; OR=2,45 (1,99-3,02)], amenaza [p=0,001; OR=14,55 (IC95%: 1,78-118,58)] y en la violencia física [p=0,009; OR=4,46 (IC95%: 1,34-14,86)]. **Conclusión:** la violencia cometida y sufrida en parejas de adolescentes es frecuente y ocurre principalmente en los varones, destacando el componente verbal emocional y la amenaza. Se recomienda fortalecer el trabajo tanto del sector educación y salud para contribuir con la reducción de la violencia.

**Palabras clave:** violencia de pareja, adolescente, estudiantes, Perú. (Fuente: DeCS, BIREME).

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**Reception date:** 13 de setiembre de 2019

**Approval date:** 09 de diciembre de 2019

**Quote as:** Gonzalez-Cordero C, Cervera-Flores W, Alvarado-Ríos V, Izquierdo-Príncipe A, Neyra W, Morales J. Violencia de pareja en adolescentes estudiantes de colegios estatales de Lima Norte. Rev. Peru. Investig. Salud. [Internet]; 4(2): 57-64. Available from: <http://revistas.unheval.edu.pe/index.php/repis/article/view/330>

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## Introduction

The violence against the women is a public health problem and a violation of human rights; at worldwide, the 30% of the women who have been in a relationship have experienced some type of physical and / or sexual violence in their lives by their couple (1). In the Americas, the prevalence of women who have ever experienced couple violence ranges from 14% to 17% in Brazil, Panama, and Uruguay, to 58.5% in Bolivia (2). In Peru, the 65.4% of women suffered some type of violence from the husband or couple; among the types of violence, the 65.5% was psychological or verbal violence, the 30.6% physical violence and the 6.5% sexual violence (3).

In the United States of America; the physical

violence during the courtship among the students ranged from 5.5% to 12.1% (4). In South Africa; the 19% of teenagers were victims / survivors of the couple violence and the 13% reported that they perpetrated the couple violence (5).

There are multiple risk factors for the perpetration of the couple violence in teenagers, such as the mental health problems, the aggressive thoughts, youth violence, the consumption of alcohol and illegal substances, the risky sexual behaviors, the poor relationship with friends and family (6) from neighborhoods with visibly high levels of social violence and illegal behavior (7). The consumption of illicit drugs such as the marijuana can increase the probability of victimization or perpetration of the violence (8). The unhealthy, abusive, or violent relationships

can have serious consequences and short and long-term negative effects in the teenagers; the violence in an teenager relationship sets the stage for problems in future relationships, including the couple violence and the sexual violence or victimization throughout the life (9) (10).

The men and women can be both perpetrators and victims of the couple violence; as a consequence of the couple violence, they may experience psychological symptoms, such as post-traumatic stress, the depression and suicide, injuries, chronic pain, gastrointestinal and gynecological signs, including the sexually transmitted diseases (11) (12) (13).

In Peru, about the 62.5% of Peruvian teenagers between 15 and 19 years old have suffered some form of violence, those it physical, psychological or sexual at any time in their lives (14); however, the couple violence among the teenagers has not been specified. The relationships between teenagers are not fully known for the parents and are rather confidential or kept within the friendship circle, which may conceal the dimension of the problem. The objective of the research was to determine the frequency of the couple violence in teenager students from public schools in Puente Piedra district located at north of Lima.

## Methods

### Design and context

The research was descriptive cross-sectional. It was realized in public high schools of the Puente Piedra district, located at the North of Lima.

### Population and sample

The population was made up of students of both genders, who were from the first to fifth grades of the high school in five public schools located in the jurisdiction of the Puente Piedra district. The sampling was carried out for convenience, according to the facilities provided by the classroom teachers during the visit to the selected schools.

### Study variable

Couple violence: Is the abusive teenager behavior in the relationships, includes physical, verbal, or sexual abuse.

### Measuring instrument

The Spanish version of the Conflict Questionnaire in teenager relationships (CQTR) (15), developed by Wolf et al (16) was used. The CQTR consists of 35 items, of which 25 are related to violence and they are distributed in five dimensions: sexual violence (4 items = 2, 13, 15, 19), relational violence (3 items = 3, 20 and 35), verbal-emotional violence (10 items = 4, 7, 9, 12, 17, 21, 23, 24, 28 and 32), threats (4 items = 5, 29, 31 and 33) and physical violence (4 items = 8, 25, 30 and 34), the remaining 10 items refer to the positive behaviors in the conflict resolution and should not be included in the analysis; however, they should be kept in the questionnaire to give more balance to the scale.

All the items from the CQTR are made up of two sentences: The first one refers to the perpetrated aggressions and the second one to the violent behaviors suffered it which allow to have two independent measures that correspond to the violence committed and to the violence suffered, respectively (15).

The evaluation of each item was performed according the Likert scale, qualifying: never (this has not happened in our relationship), rarely (it has only happened 1 or 2 times), sometimes (it has happened between 3 to 5 times) and frequently (it has happened in 6 or more occasions), the following scores were assigned: never = 1, rarely = 2, sometimes = 3 and frequently = 4. The instrument can be applied to teenagers from 14 years old (17). In the Peru, the CQTR has been used in other studies (18) (19).

According to the scores of each dimension, they were categorized into four groups: Never, low, medium and high, both in the violence committed and in the violence suffered.

Sexual violence: never (0-4), low (5-8), medium (9-12) and high (13-16).

Relational violence: never (0-3), low (4-6), medium (7-9) and high (10-12).

Emotional verbal violence: never (0-10), low (11-20), medium (21-30) and high (31-40).

Threats: never (0-4), low (5-8), medium (9-12) and high (13-16).

Physical violence: never (0-4), low (5-8), medium (9-12) and high (13-16).

Global violence: never (0-25), low (26-50), medium (51-75) and high (76-100).

For the bivariate analysis, they were recategorized into two groups: The category was never named "No" to indicate "non-violence", while the low, medium or high category was classified as "YES", to refer to the existence of violence; this recategorization was applied to all components of the violence.

## Procedures

The technique used was the self-administered individual survey and it was applied in the classrooms of each educational institution, it was under the leadership of the interviewers. Before the application of the instrument began, the interviewers complied with informing the objectives of the study and the voluntary and anonymous nature. The survey application took approximately 20 minutes. The data collection was carried out from May to June 2018.

## Statistical analysis

The collected data was entered into a matrix in the 23 version of the IBM SPSS Statistics software. The descriptive statistics of the age variable were obtained; the data of the qualitative variables were distributed and represented in frequency tables. The violence variable and its components were grouped into the violence committed and the violence suffered. For the bivariate analysis of the variables, the Chi square statistic was used, considering the p value  $<0.05$  as significant. The Odds ratio (OR) with 95% confidence interval was estimated.

## Ethical aspects

The research was carried out with the permission of the authorities of each educational institution and the consent and acceptance of the participants was also obtained. The project was evaluated and approved by the Ethics Committee of the University of Sciences and Humanities (Code 003-2018).

## Results

A total of 215 teenagers of both sexes participated, six were excluded for being younger than 14 years old and one for presenting incomplete data. Of the 208 teenagers (Mean = 15.48; SD = 0.99; Range: 14 to 18), the 59.6% (n = 124) corresponded to the male sex and the rest to the female; most of

them were in the third and fourth year. The 63.9% (n = 133) of the teenagers declared having a couple at the time of the survey, the 35.1% (n = 73) with the knowledge of the parents and the 17.8% (n = 37) had parental consent (Table 1).

**Table 1. General Characteristics to the teenager students from public high schools of North Lima**

General Characteristics	n	%
<b>Total</b>	<b>208</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Sex</b>		
Female	84	40,4
Male	124	59,6
<b>Degree of instruction</b>		
Third	73	35,1
Fourth	78	37,5
Fifth	57	27,4
<b>Current couple holding</b>		
Yes	133	63,9
No	75	36,1
<b>Parents' knowledge</b>		
Yes	73	35,1
No	135	64,9
<b>Parental consent</b>		
Yes	37	17,8
No	171	82,2

High proportions of the teenagers have committed some type of violence and express themselves in different forms of violence (sexual, relational, verbal, emotional, threatening, and physical); however, the frequency of the violence committed is predominantly low in each of the dimensions. Similarly, a high proportion of teenagers have suffered from some type of violence and the frequency of occurrence in each of the forms of violence is low (Table 2).

The violence committed, in its relational violence dimension, was presented in a higher proportion in male teenagers [ $p = 0.045$ ; OR = 2.52 (95% CI: 1.01-6.33)]. The violence committed in the threat dimension also occurred in a greater proportion in males [ $p = 0.002$ ; OR = 8.15 (95% CI: 1.71-38.87)] (Table 3).

**Table 2. Nivel de violencia Table 2. Level of violence committed and suffered according to dimensions in the teenager students from public high schools of North Lima**

Dimensions	Violence committed		Violence suffered	
	n	%	n	%
<b>Total</b>	133	100	133	100
<b>Global violence</b>				
Never	1	,8	1	,8
Low	74	55,6	77	57,9
Medium	58	43,6	55	41,4
<b>Dimensions</b>				
<b>Sexual</b>				
Never	7	5,3	14	10,5
Low	91	68,4	85	63,9
Medium	32	24,1	34	25,6
High	3	2,3	0	0,0
<b>Relational</b>				
Never	23	17,3	22	16,5
Low	77	57,9	67	50,4
Medium	30	22,6	40	30,1
High	3	2,3	4	3,0
<b>Verbal emotional</b>				
Never	3	2,3	3	2,3
Low	74	55,6	62	46,6
Medium	53	39,8	62	46,6
High	3	2,3	6	4,5
<b>Threat</b>				
Never	12	9,0	10	7,5
Low	70	52,6	78	58,6
Medium	45	33,8	43	32,3
High	6	4,5	2	1,5
<b>Physical</b>				
Never	19	14,3	15	11,3
Low	78	58,6	82	61,7
Medium	36	27,1	36	27,1
High	0	0,0	0	0,0

The violence suffered, in the verbal emotional dimension, threat and physical violence, was presented in a higher proportion in male teenagers. Showing significant differences in emotional verbal violence [ $p = 0.04$ ; OR = 2.45 (1.99-3.02)], threat [ $p = 0.001$ ; OR = 14.55 (95% CI: 1.78-118.58)] and in physical violence [ $p = 0.009$ ; OR = 4.46 (95% CI: 1.34-14.86)] (Table 4).

## Discussion

The violence committed and the violence suffered occurred in a high proportion of the teenagers couples. The verbal emotional

component of the violence suffered and the threat component of the violence committed reached a high level.

The frequency of violence among teenagers is worrying, while they are similar with the results of other studies. In Curitiba, Brazil, the 91% of the participants have perpetrated and the 90.1% have suffered at least one of the types of violence (20), while in Galicia, the 92% of teenagers in high schools from public institutes have ever suffered verbal violence (21). In Chile, the prevalence of violence in teenager couples relationships was to the 10%, with psychological violence being the most frequent (22).



**Table 3. Violence committed according the gender among teenager students from public high schools of North Lima**

Dimensions	Violence committed						P value	OR ( IC 95% )
	Total		Female		Male			
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Total	133	100	56	100	77	100		
Global violence								
No	1	0,8	1	1,8	0	0,0	0,239	2,4 (1,96-2,94)
Yes	132	99,2	55	98,2	77	100		
Dimensions								
Sexual violence								
No	7	5,3	5	8,9	2	2,6	0,106	3,68 (0,69-19,69)
Yes	126	94,7	51	91,1	75	97,4		
Relational violence								
No	23	17,3	14	25	9	11,7	0,045	2,52 (1,01-6,33)
Yes	110	82,7	42	75	68	88,3		
Verbal emotional violence								
No	3	2,3	1	1,8	2	2,6	0,756	0,68 (0,06-7,71)
Yes	130	97,7	55	98,2	75	97,4		
Threat								
No	12	9	10	17,9	2	2,6	0,002	8,15 (1,71-38,87)
Yes	121	91	46	82,1	75	97,4		
Physical violence								
No	19	14,3	9	16,1	10	13	0,616	1,28 (0,48-3,40)
Yes	114	85,7	47	83,9	67	87		

In teenagers from public schools in Curitiba, the verbal / emotional violence presented the highest frequencies of perpetration and victimization. The psychological violence was reported in 90% of the participants and in 39.6% it was accompanied by other type of violence. Regarding the violence suffered, the 89.2% of the participants reported having been victims of psychological violence and the 36.9% were also accompanied by other violence (20).

In this research, the violence committed was presented in men, especially in the relational and the threat component. The violence suffered also occurred in the men and it occurred mainly in the verbal-emotional component, threat and physical violence. These findings indicate the reciprocity of violence in teenager couples.

The fact that the violence committed and the suffered is more frequent in men was unpredictable. In the Peru it is perceived as a macho society, and in these conditions it is expected that the violence committed will be greater in the men and the violence suffered in

the women. Researches report that the women show higher levels of physical aggression than the men at younger ages (23). There is still a belief that the violence is only considered when there is a physical component, while other forms such as the verbal, relational and the threats are not considered violence, in this sense the various preventive activities carried out in the various fields may generate greater sensitivity among men and therefore be recognized the other expressions of violence.

There are numerous factors associated with the teenager couple violence: the attitudes of justification for violence, the classmates influence, the exposure to the violence within the family or community, the history of physical and psychological abuse, the sexual abuse and the negative parenting habits, the traditional gender stereotypes, the communication and social skills deficits, the inadequate anger management, the low self-esteem, the alcohol and other drug use, the personal history of aggression, the lack of empathy and lack of social support (10). The alcohol and drugs influence cognitive functioning and reduce self-control, therefore,

in the context of nightlife, the consumption of these substances are potentially generators of violence, with jealousy as triggers (24).

In the women, the early sexual onset increases to 5.72 times the risk of physical violence (OR =

6.72; 95% CI: 2.52-17.87) and to 7.82 times the risk of psychological violence (OR = 8.82; 95% CI: 4.10-19.0). The women with early sexual onset have a higher percentage of control practices and abuse of and towards their couple (22).

**Table 4. Violence suffered according the gender among teenager students from public high schools of North Lima**

Dimensions	Violence suffered						P value	OR (IC 95%)
	Total		Female		Male			
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Total	133	100	56	100	77	100		
<b>Global violence</b>								
No	1	0,8	1	1,8	0	0,0	0,239	2,4 (1,96-2,94)
Yes	132	99,2	55	98,2	77	100		
<b>Dimensions</b>								
Sexual violence								
No	14	10,5	9	16,1	5	6,5	0,076	2,76 (0,87-8,74)
Yes	119	89,5	47	83,9	72	93,5		
Relational violence								
No	22	16,5	13	23,2	9	11,7	0,077	2,29 (0,90-5,80)
Yes	111	83,5	43	76,8	68	88,3		
Verbal emotional violence								
No	3	2,3	3	5,4	0	0,0	0,040	2,45(1,99-3,02)
Yes	130	97,7	53	94,6	77	100		
Threat								
No	10	7,5	9	16,1	1	1,3	0,001	14,55 (1,78-118,58)
Yes	123	92,5	47	83,9	76	98,7		
Physical violence								
No	15	11,3	11	19,6	4	5,2	0,009	4,46 (1,34-14,86)
Yes	118	88,7	45	80,4	73	94,8		

The concern about the violence in teenagers is due to the fact that it increases the risk of committing assaults in later life (10), however, as the young adults develop higher quality relationships, they move towards abandoning the couple violence. The relationships characterized by the greater trust, the commitment, and fidelity and less verbal conflict, it decrease the experiences of couple violence (25).

Inside the limitations, the selection of the sample that was not random should be considered, and within each participating school, no selection strategy was used either based in the opportunity, according to the availability of free space provided by the teachers. According with the magnitude of the problem, it is an opportunity to consider future researches that allow exploring the etiology of

the violence.

## Conclusion

The violence committed and suffered in the teenager couples is frequent and occurs mainly in the men, highlighting the verbal emotional component and the threat. It is recommended to strengthen the research of both the education and health sectors to contribute to the reduction of the violence.

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