

# Female Violence and Crime in Brazil from Interdisciplinary Perspective

Kátia Ovídia José de Souza

National School of Public Health Sergio Arouca, Oswaldo Cruz Foundation, Street Leopoldo Bulhões, 1480, Manguinhos, Rio de Janeiro, RJ, Brazil  
katiaovidia@oi.com.br

**Abstract** Between the studies about gender and marital violence, the focus is more on women as victims of violence. This situation is important, but based on a theoretical discussion with authors of the health and sociology health field during the decade 2000, this article aims to investigate the feminine violence. In the literature about gender violence, there are few studies about the visibility of the woman as author of violent acts, specifically, drug trafficking, the main reason for the imprisonment of woman in recent years in Brazil, and contributing to the increase in rates of the woman as author of violent acts. Thereby, this article tries to contribute with more enlightenment about feminine violence, a theme which is not much discussed between Brazilian authors.

**Keywords** Violence, Delinquency of Women, Drug Trafficking

## 1. Introduction

"Violence is a socio-historical phenomenon and follows the whole experience of humanity", a social and public health problem, with effects on individual and collective health that need attention and intervention measures[1]. Gender violence is an expression of the type of violence that includes: a violent act perpetrated by men against women, by women against men, among men and women[2]. The emphasis in studies of gender-based violence is violence against women, she being the victim of various forms of oppression, domination and aggression by physical, psychological, social and sexual.

Very little has been researched over the woman as the author of acts of violence. Several authors supporting the view that has been attributed little or no value to female violence[3-11].

Rare are the books and debates that include women as the author of crimes. If anything, the criminological literature or novels, women are treated as co-author, architect or an accomplice of crimes, and rarely as the creator of her crime[3].

Most studies on gender violence[11] emphasizes more violence against women associated with domestic violence, naming the violence as constitutive of masculinity, that is, "Much of the author analyzes the problem from one-way, the direction of the violence of man for woman"[6].

The most apparent reasons for the poor visibility or even

the absence of studies on female violence are: low incidence crimes of female authorship, compared to the crimes of male authors; the course is not apparent or concealment of female violence; the mode of participation in crime; lower recidivism to crime in comparison with males; legally irrelevant to criminal involvement; low reporting of female crimes; the prejudice of the people, who attach little or no value to the manifestations of female violence; lack of public pressure, which is not interested in the topic; the discrimination of public and police; and discrimination by the legislature and the judiciary[4,5,9,12].

Nevertheless, Brazilian statistics about women prisoners, obtained from the Ministry of Justice and the National Penitentiary Department, in the year 2001 (with 5465 prisoners), 2004 (with 16,473 prisoners) and 2005 (with 12,925 prisoners), there was an increase the women in Brazilian prison[10]. In 2005, there were 12,925 prisoners in Brazil, while vacancy rates were 7836, which translated into a deficit of 5,089 vacancies[9]. Statistical data were found about Southeast of Brazil (Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Espírito Santo) for the number of women incarcerated, with the exception of the State of Minas Gerais.

In São Paulo, based on data from the Department of Corrections of April/2004, shows the increasing scale of 1988, with 235 women prisoners, the year 2004, with 2984 women prisoners[13]. As a source to the IBGE, the Ministry of Justice/DEPEN and the Secretariat of Penitentiary Administration of São Paulo, in 1950 there were 30 women prisoners between the total of 1,145 prison inmates in São Paulo, while in 2006 there were 6077 women prisoners of the total 130,391 people incarcerated in São Paulo[10]. In São Paulo to be responsible for concentrating 30% of the total arrested

\* Corresponding author:

katiaovidia@oi.com.br (Kátia Ovídia José de Souza)

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in Brazil[13]. In 2005 the State of São Paulo had the largest number of prisoners in closed regime (3375 women), half open (450 women) and security measures and treatment (78 women)[9].

In Rio de Janeiro, increase crimes committed by women, based on data from the Department of Prisons from 1995 to 1999: in 1995 there were 381 women prisoners to 9144 men prisoners and 1999 with 585 women prisoner against 14,036 men prisoner. Regardless of whether the offender is male or female, drug trafficking stands as the main crime committed in 1998[4]. According to the National Bureau of Prisons (DEPEN), the female prison population in 2000 reached 633 women. Between 1988 and 2000 there was a 132% increase in the number of women prisoners, 36% higher than the increasing number of prisoners men in the same period. The female rate (number of prey on each one hundred thousand women) increased 85.5% and male, 58.1%, so that the female rate of increase would be 27% higher than the male. Nevertheless, the number of women prisoners is small compared to men trapped; this growth translates 132% in 360 women prisoners, while 96% of inmates male represent an increase of 7974 men[5].

In the state of Espírito Santo, based on data from the National Penitentiary Department, the population of women prisoners in 1995 was 1.4% of the total, in 2004 reached 5% of the prison population in the state. In 1995 there were 25 women prisoners and in 2004 the number of women prisoners increase to 195[7].

Even with a rate much lower than male rates, the authors agree on the female prison growth. Needs attention the speed of evolution of female violence in recent years, which is greater than the rate of increase in male violence. Looking the data of the General Affairs Correctional DEPEN the MJ-December 2005, the evolution of crimes committed by women in the period 2001-2005 was 24%, while the crimes committed by men was 21% in the same period[9].

Given this reality, this article aims to investigate female violence. In the literature on gender violence by Brazilian authors of health and health sociology of the 2000s, there is little visibility of female violence, or the woman as the author of acts of violence, especially in relation to drug trafficking, the main reason imprisonment of women in recent decades. Drug trafficking is considered a crime by the Brazilian Penal Code. An example is the Law 11343 of August 23, 2006, regarding the National System of Public Policies on Drugs, which, in chapter II, art. 33, defines as crimes: import, export, send, prepare, produce, manufacture, purchase, sell, expose for sale, offer, provide, storing, transporting, bring, keep, prescribe, administer, deliver or provide consumer drugs, even for free, without authorization or in violation of the law or regulation.

The topic addressed in the paper is female violence and crime from interdisciplinary perspective, including psychology, gender studies, cultural studies, sociology and criminology. This paper is based on the literature review. We try to illuminate of some academically marginalized aspects, as silenced female violence.

## 2. Woman as Victim

As was explained earlier in this article, is not the purpose of this study to analyze violence against women, but some authors, in a cross-sectional analysis, address the issue of female violence and justify the low visibility of women precisely because it is more identified as victims (those who suffer violence). There is a process of victimization of women, she being labeled as a victim without basic rights, as the right to life, safety and welfare.

The studies of some authors[3,4,6,9,10,13-22] argue that the absence or invisibility of female violence should be caused for social control of patriarchal society exercised over the female and the bipolarity of public-private space. These assumptions are related to the context of women and violence, the spotlight on the relationship of the marital violence.

The characterization of women as weak, submissive, passive, educated to be mother, with sexual repression, based on the model of Mary, a deified image of woman and unable to be violent, would be dictated by patriarchal normative prescription, in order to maintain male dominance over females, socially legitimated[21].

Through motherhood the man "fix" the woman of his origin sinful Eve Remnants. This thinking can still be found in idea of the menstrual colic's of the woman will be passed when she be married, because the man will calm the woman's uterus and make her mother of his children[3].

Thus, man would have rights over women and an honor to uphold, which could be expressed through the domestication of women through violence, ensuring his honor male whose masculinity is associated with dominant power. The one-sided perspective of the characterization of man as the aggressor and the woman as victim causes a

Naturalization of hegemonic gender roles, involves the appointment of prescribers as social behavior, damaging both the woman and man. Both are under pressure to conform to such roles, while woman is taken to the private area, without power and have her repressed sexuality, man is constantly identifying himself with masculinity and manliness, being unable to fully experience affective experiences[22].

Men and women play a pre-set according to gender roles socially agreed. The female violence is still seen as pathology, because the violent behavior of women being is labeled as inappropriate and not feminine[4].

The main ideologue of women's prisons in Brazil was Lemos de Brito. The first women's prison was built in Rio de Janeiro in 1942, designed to assure the desired peace and tranquility in male prisons, hitherto shared by men and women. The religious congregation was of great importance in female prisons, the religious congregation worked to help the domestication woman through of the constant vigilance of her sexuality[5].

The man in prison was recovered for to be "citizens" and reintegrated into the community. While woman in prison was recovered for to be housewife, restored to occupy a

home and her family, cooking for her husband and give education to children, was her destination[13].

The woman duty was ensure the care of the household, by the exercise of home chores and caring for the children while the man was dedicated to public space, social life and business[3]. This dichotomy of the public/private space is related to the type of violence committed by men, prevailing mortality from external causes, while women suffer more physical and sexual violence. So men get involved more with violence and urban crime, and women with domestic conflicts. Statistics show, according to 1999 data from the Civil Police of the State of Rio de Janeiro, that the practice of murder by men was 81.1%, and the women, 8.4%. The same source data, 59.3% of complaints by intentional injuries were women and 35.7% of men. These data indicate that men are more affected by violence in the form of homicides, while women are more affected in relation to morbidity (impairment of health due to violence), centering the focus on violence directed at women in the private space[17].

Men are portrayed as villains and victims. There was the proportion of 12 men deaths for one woman death, and man can be villains in relation violence against woman. In a survey in 2005, 43% women reported having experienced violence by man during his lifetimes, 33% some form of physical violence, 13% sexual violence and 27% psychological[11].

Contrary to the traditional family (mother, father and children) and domestic violence against women, we need recognize and remember the existence of violent relationships between gay couples and in heterosexual relationships which the woman is the main aggressor[22].

### 3. Reversal of the Position of Victim (Passive) for the Aggressive (Violent)

At the turn of the twentieth century, female violence was attributed the influence of physiological state in woman life: puberty, menstruation, menopause and childbirth - that is, the influences related to sexuality and motherhood[5]. The incarcerated women deny this myth of female deified, becomes its antithesis, the shadow of the holy woman and mother, and the act of violence becomes a way to break boundaries[3,10].

Breaking this paradigm, the inclusion of woman in public spaces, the woman search for autonomy, transform the patriarchal order, finally, women's empowerment, wage labor and the struggles for citizenship from feminist movements in 1960 and 1970. More than one an integration of woman in public space was confront with patriarchal order. The female transgression would be an escape, a way to demonstrate her dissatisfaction and questioning the sexist structure[3].

Woman have long been represented and representatives of the quiet figure, dedicated to romantic love and housewife, as incapable criminal of committing crimes. Woman rebels against the woman status that had been imposed over the

centuries, as well as against cruelty, against submission and also against the underestimation of her ability to commit a crime[3].

The woman, through violence, gets talking, leave the private space. By committing an act of violence, she likes any other criminal. Nevertheless, female violence is seen as an exception to the stereotype of female chastity, for being an action in public space with a new kind of woman to be presented to society, which is outside the model stigmatized as good mother, gentle and housewife[3].

### 4. Women in Drug Trafficking

The problem of drug trafficking today is growing; their authors can be man or woman. Drug trafficking has become one of the central problems of violence in Brazil, especially in large urban centers in the Southeast. The violence associated with drug trafficking is expressed in constant conflict, with consequent repercussions on security and quality of life. It does increase the morbidity and mortality from external causes, which, in turn, force the health sector, with the victims of urban violence who come to emergency departments of hospitals and the need for specialized care and physical rehabilitation and psychological.

The criminality and delinquency are violence and a penal infraction- respectively, crime and penal misdemeanor. The penal misdemeanor is the violation of a penal norm minor at the discretion of the legislature, also called "crime dwarf". The concepts of crime vary with time and space, being a social phenomenon. The crime, in its broadest sense, in the legal point of view, it is human conduct (action or omission) that violates the penal law. Crime comes from the Latin *Crimen* (accusation, complaint, grievance, injury), and generally means any action, committed with intent or negligence, contrary to the customs, morals and law[3].

The delinquency begins to be regarded as a breach of the individual's relationship with his social space. The delict word, derived from the Latin *delictum* of *delinquere*, is, in general, applied to mean or imply any unlawful act. Thus, delict is a generic scope while crime and misdemeanor are species. This reason, the delict is shown an act that violates or offends the laws or ordinances instituted by our law. It has wider significance than the crime, which is defined as human action or inaction anti-law, typical, guilty and punishable, or willful or negligent conduct that violates the criminal law and is punishable. There isn't in the Criminal Law Brazilian distinction between crime and delict, such expressions used as synonyms. Thus, punishable fact is the designation broader, encompassing crime (or delict) and misdemeanor, which are distinct species of delict.

At the beginning of the twentieth century women were characterized author of crimes as induced abortion for reasons of honor and infanticide by psychic crisis puerperal background, crimes associated with motherhood. Prostitution and sexuality to non-reproductive was crime because could endanger the morals and family[5].

The crimes committed by women were hardly detectable due to the nature of the offenses, for example, poisoning, and her main victims were children and old people, most vulnerable victims, unable to denounce it or to resist, especially crimes committed in space of private life[5].

From mid-twentieth century and the beginning of this century, crimes are no longer centralized in private space; they make part in the public space and lose the connotation of crimes related to motherhood. Majority of women, between 1998 and 1999 in prison, had committed crimes directed against husbands and partners, and only in the third against children[3]. Prevailed crimes related to drugs, after, crimes, robbery and theft and murder. Crimes committed by women in the period 1999 to 2000, in Rio de Janeiro, were those associated with drugs (use, trafficking and gang formation) in the first place. In second, are the violent crime, murder, infanticide, injuries, thefts, robberies, kidnappings, extortion and violent attacks on decency[5].

Drug trafficking has become the first cause of the imprisonment of women of all age groups in Rio de Janeiro in the last 15 years. In 1988, 32.6% (89 women) of women prisoners in the State of Rio de Janeiro was because of crimes related to drugs, while in 1999 and 2000 the percentage of inmates serving time for the same reason rose to 56% (294 women). Thus, "between 1988 and 1999/2000, tripled the number of women convicted of drug trafficking and did not even double the number of women convicted of other crimes"[5].

Theme of women's involvement in drug trafficking has been little explored and little is known about the inclusion of women in this criminal field[4]. Few authors addressed the issue of women in drug trafficking[4,5,8,9,12,13].

The inclusion of women in drug trafficking can occur in two main ways: by boyfriends or more independently. In the latter case, although it does not exclude a participation of male influence, this is not a determinant of entry and continuity in trafficking[4].

The entry of women into trafficking can be due to unemployment, low wages compared to men's wages and the increase of women responsible financially for their families[13]. But also adds the power through crime, easy money and the authority[8].

However, the increase in women prisoners can be due most of women play in trafficking subordinates roles, and more easy captured by police. In decreasing order of frequency and importance the woman roles in the drug trafficking area: "*bucha*" (person who is arrested for being present in the crime scene); consumers; "mule" or "airplane" (drug carriers); steam (which negotiates small quantities in retail); "an accomplice" or "assistant/*fogueteira*" (whom warns with fireworks to bandits that the police are coming up). Besides the obvious increase in violence because of drug trafficking in both sexes, there can be a low indulgence on the part of the justice system in relation to the condemnation of women[5].

Although the woman can occupy a subordinate position hierarchically in the drug trafficking, this does not exclude

the possibility of an important practice of woman in trafficking hierarchy as supplier/distributor, dealer, manager, owner of mouth-to-smoke and cashier/accountant. Currently deserves to be further investigated scientifically the women roles, in the high roles in drug trafficking, because the female violence is increasingly related to drug trafficking.

There is need for further studies on the context surrounding the violence and the woman that receives a little attention when it occupies the headlines newspapers for his performance in crimes, until the male violence robs you of the scene, disguising the female crimes[5]. These facts point to the need to build public politics for women prisoners. The focus should be on women's health in the context of violence, she being a victim or a perpetrator, but above all woman.

## 5. Conclusions

The literature on gender violence discussed in this paper explains the presence of a strong association of woman with the condition of the victim, a concept that is influenced by the precepts of the patriarchal society and the decoupling of public-private space. The woman in the private space would not be able to break with this situation, much less dare to insert themselves in drug trafficking.

The focus should be on denaturalization of the woman as only victims of the violence. The position of aggressor and victim in a gender perspective includes the situation man or woman in discourse of violence. Both man and woman can be victims and perpetrators. So we avoided generalizations, placing man as perpetrators and woman as victims of violence[6].

We prevent the reproduction an analysis based on victimization, because the roles of victim and aggressor are interchangeable[6,18]. The important is the relationship between man and woman, because "If men and women are victim and/or actor of violence, the focus should then fall on how to build such relationships"[18], an aspect which has not been given due importance in view of the literature on violence and health[11].

The statistics presented show men as the main victims of urban violence, but do not exclude women as perpetrators of violence. In fact, women are placed on the margins, especially in drug trafficking, reaching ever more prominent positions.

The inclusion of women in drug trafficking reinforces her presence in the field of crime. This should be the object of attention of scholars of gender violence, with greater investments in the subject in order to generate a practice of professional health to care of women in the context of violence, the woman victim or author of the act of violence.

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