Volume 22 Issue 50
Originally issued as C6



Global Journal of human-social science: C
Sociology & Culture
Volume 22 Issue 6 Version 1.0 Year 2022
Type: Double Blind Peer Reviewed International Research Journal
Publisher: Global Journals
Online ISSN: 2249-460X & Print ISSN: 0975-587X

Romantic Love and Violence against Women from a Gender Approach

By Camila Lucía Torrico Cano & Dolly Alcoba
Universidad La Salle Bolivia

Abstract- Romantic love is dangerous for many women. Violence against them (VAW) and femicides increase and are mostly perpetrated by their (ex) partners. The Objective of the present study was to describe the personal interpretations of Romantic Love and VAW of men and women who go to the University in La Paz; the study has a qualitative approach of the explanatory descriptive type, based on focus groups and a scale. Despite sharing some indicators, men and women interpret them differently, but these respond to the traditional image of romantic love, where VAW is normalized, so a possible way to counteract it is by deconstructing romantic love, and the gender stereotypes that they promote.

Keywords: romantic love, holistic love, young people attending university, gender roles and stereotypes and violence against women (VAW).

GJHSS-C Classification: DDC Code: 813.4 LCC Code: PS1017



Strictly as per the compliance and regulations of:



© 2022. Camila Lucía Torrico Cano & Dolly Alcoba. This research/review article is distributed under the terms of the Attribution-NonCommercial-NoDerivatives 4.0 International (CC BY-NC-ND 4.0). You must give appropriate credit to authors and reference this article if parts of the article are reproduced in any manner. Applicable licensing terms are at https://creativecommons org/licenses/by-nc-nd/4.0/.

Romantic Love and Violence against Women from a Gender Approach

Camila Lucía Torrico Cano [α] & Dolly Alcoba [σ]

Abstract- Romantic love is dangerous for many women. Violence against them (VAW) and femicides increase and are mostly perpetrated by their (ex) partners. The Objective of the present study was to describe the personal interpretations of Romantic Love and VAW of men and women who go to the University in La Paz; the study has a qualitative approach of the explanatory descriptive type, based on focus groups and a scale. Despite sharing some indicators, men and women interpret them differently, but these respond to the traditional image of romantic love, where VAW is normalized, so a possible way to counteract it is by deconstructing romantic love, and the gender stereotypes that they promote.

Keywords: romantic love, holistic love, young people attending university, gender roles and stereotypes and violence against women (VAW).

I. Introduction

Love is part of the life of human beings, it has been crucial since the beginning of time and it has been addressed by different disciplines. There are different types of love, one of these being romantic love, which has become a potential source of danger, especially for women (Gualano, 2018). Society pressures people to think that love should be above all else and that having a partner is a necessity, and while love itself is a necessity, the problem lies in the fact that we are not even talking about a holistic or healthy love, but about a model of romantic love that perpetuates erroneous and dangerous ideas, since this model, not only favors inequality, affecting both men and women, but it is also a real source of danger. In the traditional romantic love model, men's emotions are not well seen or understood, although they exist, it is often assumed that these emotions cannot or should not be shown, since that would imply weakness. So, what should men do with these emotions? It is clear that if these emotions and feelings are not expressed, it is very difficult to manage them correctly. As a consequence, this could lead to gender-based violence, since masculinity, in order to be reaffirmed, would lead to the abuse of women to legitimize itself (Herrera, 2012).

It is estimated that at least one in three women in their lifetime has suffered violence, especially from their partners. Worldwide speaking in 2017, more than a third of women were murdered by their current or former partners. According to Miranda (2019) from the BBC (*The British Broadcasting Corporation*), Bolivia ranked first in femicides in all of South America; this year, more than 70 femicides were documented in the country and according to data from the Special Force to Combat Violence (FELCV) the reported cases of violence against women increase visibly every year; in 2018 more than 38. 000 incidents of aggression against women were reported. That is alarming and also raises the question of the number of cases which were not reported. It should be taken into account that this problem is even more serious than what is reflected in the data verified and obtained by various organizations and institutions.

There are worldwide studies that address these two topics, which show the importance that society gives to *romantic love*, its myths and how these play a role in maintaining violent relationships and how society accepts this violence. How the traditional concept of love and representations of idealized love maintain a view that keeps people confined within the myths of *romantic love* (García, Hernández y Monter, 2019). A model of love that plays a determinant role in how couple-relationships are lived and how inequalities in regards to power are promoted and how these, contribute to the maintenance and normalization of VAW. As mentioned by Cerro y Vives (2019), this is in part due to the internalized gender roles and stereotypes that, together with the myths of romantic love, sustain said model of love.

One of the possible explanations as to why VAW occurs, especially from partners (from the gender approach), could be that VAW is caused by inequitable power relations. It is important to address this during emerging adulthood or youth, (in this case university students), since as mentioned (Craig, 2009), it is at this stage that different changes arise in human beings, not only physically and socially but also cognitive and emotional; It is defined as a step ahead of adolescence, but also one before adulthood as such, being a period of transition, where stability and self-affirmation are sought after. That's why in this context, the information collected is meant to shed a light on this problem, to analyze it and understand it, not just as passive spectators or based on mere statistical data. Thus, giving it a voice and analyzing how these concepts are construed or formed, because the goal is not just to impose different types of social punishment on the perpetrators or create more laws, but to understand the root of the problem, how it arises and how we can have a good understanding of it.

Author α σ: Instituto de Investigación en Ciencias Humanas y de la Educación-Universidad La Salle Bolivia.
e-mails: camila.ltorricoc@gmail.com, do.alcoba@gmail.com

© 2022 Global Journals

Getting involved in this subject, by investigating and analyzing it, could contribute not only to an approach or perspective on how to understand it, since it also allows everyone to recognize that it exists and that it is an everyday reality, but at the same time, imply that this phenomenon can be changed and thus, with greater knowledge about it, formulate strategies to address it, putting an emphasis on prevention and the promotion of a good quality of life. It is important to take into account that *romantic love,* being a cultural and social construction which depends on the particular environment and epoch; the concept that young people attending college in the city of La Paz have of it, also has its particularities, so it is proper to study this within its particular epoch and context. The current model must be known, because, although it is nurtured by the past, it also acquires its own characteristsics over time (Herrera, 2020).

One of the possible causes that determines that Violence Against Women has reached such high levels, could be the normalization of violence; VAW has been normalized and linked to sociocultural patterns learned and transmitted from generation to generation. That is why it is necessary to work on the deconstruction and reconstruction of the concept, as well as the stereotypes and misconceptions that are held about gender and its attributions (Jahan, 2018). It is appropriate to emphasize that violence in this context is learned, therefore, there is a lot that can be done about it. It is possible to contribute to this generation and to break the patterns of violence against women that have occurred so far, since VAW is not only a cause of inequality, but also a consequence of it, so we must move forward and seek to obtain societies that are more committed and just.

Through a process of analysis and critique, we can deconstruct ideas that have been normalized, prejudices, myths and subjective beliefs that have been distorting the understanding of love, and that have made it a source of problems. When we realize that this phenomenon can often be considered irrational and not susceptible to be treated and investigated, we can explain why, especially in the Bolivian context, not much of this kind of research has been carried out. *Romantic love* is also related to the perpetuation of women's subordination, gender inequity and its implication in violence against women. Understanding these mechanisms and how they work, therefore, leads to their transformation in the future (Galarza et al. 2005). VAW will not cease to exist if it is not recognized and this is because it is not merely a matter of learning to live and deal with it, but also of perceiving it as a phenomenon that can be controlled and that can be transformed in the present and future. Treating it as something that transcends science and that must be addressed by society itself. Future generations can create and live in a world without violence, with physical, mental and emotional health, well-being and a good quality of life.

II. Conceptual References

To understand this research, it is necessary to take into account factors such as gender, which arises from the need to break with the concept of sex, which biologically determines people and was also used to symbolically and effectively determine their destinies by clearly differentiating men and women. However, taking into account that such terminology is remade with each new research that is carried out; it can be concluded that the concept itself relates to science, society and the construction of identity; and it also allows us to analyze how sociocultural characteristics influence the creation of identity and the view that one has or seeks to project towards others. (Casares, 2008).

In order to understand gender stereotypes and gender roles, it is important to identify the thin line that separates these two concepts, since they constantly feed-back on each other. According to Casares (2008), gender roles are any activity or behavior that is assigned to each sex and that depends on each society; they vary according to culture, society and time, and are influenced by economic, ethnic and religious factors. Stereotypes, on the other hand, are based on the way people perceive reality, they are part of the symbolic world and are believed to be the main cause of inequality between people. It could be said that they are an accumulation of concise ideas that are deeply rooted in the conscious and unconscious and that they are detached from the control of reason, it should also be emphasized that their impetus is not only psychological, but that being endowed with a perfect material reality within the societies that conceive them, they are reinforced and strengthened, becoming thus consolidated. What is intended is to normalize the differentiation between sexes, providing each one with roles which they claim are better endowed for each one. These roles and stereotypes vary from one society to another, and are maintained and reinforced thanks to the social condemnation inflicted on people who do not conform to them; they are supported by the feedback mechanisms that each society provides and thanks to the relationship between the mental image built by society of each sex and the role they are expected to fulfill.

Regarding love, it can be said that it is difficult to define, and this is because there are many differences between the information provided by the different points of view from which it is approached (psychology, history, anthropology, etc.), but in order to address any problem to be investigated, it is important to conceptualize it theoretically, taking into account culture, history and science and how these influence its construction (Galarza et al. 2005). Love is a fairly complex human construct that also has a social and cultural dimension that intervenes and comes to determine couple-relationships. Emotions and sexuality

© 2022 Global Journals

are physical, chemical and hormonal phenomena that also have a cultural and social component, which is constructed and varies from time to time and from culture to culture. There is no single type of love, since it changes with time and space, but many authors argue that the idea of "loving" is part of the the human condition (Herrera, 2020).

Romantic love is a socio-cultural construction, by this model of love, we understand an idealization of the significant other and, at the same time, this model is nurtured by gender roles and stereotypes, already established and normalized within society Herrera (2012). García et al. (2019) consider that in order to understand how the romantic love model has been built and internalized, it is important to understand that this is closely linked to differential socialization or social contexts, those roles that have been defined, starting with the family nucleus and continuing through the educational system, the media, religion and society in general, which are the ones who dictate the role pattern and stereotype to follow, reiterate it and legitimize it, since from the moment a person is born, it is erroneously believed that he or she must play certain roles because they are men or women.

Romantic love corresponds to the preservation of gender roles and stereotypes defined by society, since the idea that people have about romantic love and relationships has been built thanks to the discourses and myths that society provides to them and commonly covers up gender-based violence (García et al. 2019: Vara-Horna and López, 2017). This model of love has become an ideal that has been gaining strength and is the one that teaches people how to relate, repress themselves and how the models of masculinity and femininity that conform to the current society should be and how to find a partner (Herrera, 2020).

Romantic love is strongly sustained by its myths, understood as collective beliefs; illusions that are socially shared and plagued by false promises. Throughout time, the myth of romantic love has grown stronger, sentimental novels have gained strength, as have numerous movies that present love stories that promote the image that love is sacrificial and represents the only happiness in life, becoming a "*collective utopia of an emotional nature*" leaving aside the meaning and construction of holistic love as such (Herrera, 2020).

Romantic myths are consolidated gender stereotypes, and make gender inequalities more evident (Herrera, 2020). Among the most common myths are: the myth of the better half, the myth of Prince Charming, the myth of jealousy, omnipotence and free will. As long as these myths promoted by society continue to be reproduced, couple-relationships and affective bonds will remain as they are today and will continue to be perpetuated and lead to VAW, which is why there is a need to understand them, in order to subsequently transform them for the benefit of all (García et al. 2019).

Vara-Horna y López (2017) define VAW as:

> *"Any action or omission exercised by men against women, within a present or past intimate relationship and in a context of inequitable power relations, so that they act against their will, through the imposition of power, threat or physical, sexual, psychological or economic harm" (pg. 23).*

This concept is based on the gender approach, which recognizes this type of violence as the consequence of unequal power relations between men and women, which have been constructed throughout history and have been naturalized through a series of socio-cultural processes (Vara-Horna and López 2017). Law 348 enacted in Bolivia establishes different forms of violence, which are based on four universal and priority types that can be psychological, physical, sexual and economic, these types of violence are interrelated and it is more common to find several types of violence at the same time, rather than cases with a single isolated type of violence (Programa Regional ComVoMujer, 2018). It is important to emphasize that VAW is most costly for society, affecting at multiple levels, such as individual, household, community and government, and that to deal with it, violence in intimate partner relationships should be encompassed in the framework, as statistics show that within the ranges of VAW, the main aggressor is the partner (Vara-Horna and Lopez, 2017).

To conduct the analysis of this research it is necessary to know the gender approach, or also known as gender perspective, which sustains the difference between both sexes and how social roles are constructed based on this difference (López, 2007), aims to achieve equal rights and opportunities for both men and women, but respecting their differences, contributing to understand relevant aspects associated with the cultural construction of each person's identity, to understand how they are generated, how relations of domination and social inequalities are produced (Miranda-Novoa, 2012).

About emerging adulthood, it can be said that in some countries it occurs legally from the age of 18 or 21, when they can vote, marry etc., without the authorization of their parents or guardians, but from another point of view, a person goes through emerging adulthood when they are able to support themselves on their own, when they choose a career, when they start an important relationship or a family. Although psychologically maturity depends on the fulfillment of certain achievements, such as independence from parents, being able to discover one's identity and develop a value system, there are psychologists who affirm that the beginning of adulthood is given by internal factors such as self-control, autonomy, etc., and not by external criteria. It is then that it refers more to a mental state, since from another point of view, some people despite their chronological age, never become adults, however, there are scientists who claim that for most people, within industrialized societies, emerging

© 2022 Global Journals

adulthood, comprises between 18-19 years to 25-29 years of age, and is a stage in which people establish who they are or who they want to be (Craig, 2009).

At this stage people are no longer teenagers, but at the same time they are not yet fulfilling adult roles as such, and although uncertainty and confusion are present causing distress, for the most part, people going through this stage have a positive outlook on their future and adult life (Craig, 2009). It could be said that there is an intellectual discovery and personal growth at the time of college, and that it is also a special and distinct time in life, and also brings a number of benefits in the short and long term and that it is more important the fact of attending a university (whatever it may be), than what kind of university is attended or what career is studied, since different research concludes that the university itself plays a fundamental role in the way people think and perceive the world, promotes reflection and flexibility of thought. It is at this stage that couples represent the most important relationship in people's lives, and that they try to find their ideal of love, seek to establish themselves, have more serious relationships, formalize them, move towards marriage and also to the establishment of a family (Craig, 2009).

III. Method

The approach of this research was qualitative, since it sought to analyze romantic love and VAW through the dialogue between people's thoughts, beliefs and feelings, by describing, understanding and explaining the phenomenon in question, focusing on understanding and deepening understanding, seeking primarily to understand the participants' perspective. Taking into account that in this approach, the studies are constructed and reconstructed continuously and are based on what the participants contribute and the new information that emerges (Balcazar et al. 2015).

It should also be noted that in this research, the "methodological complementarity" proposed by Blanco and Pirelli (2016) was used, which corresponds to a strategy that integrates techniques or instruments that come from different approaches (as in the case of the focus groups and the form with the scale of myths about love) so that they can be analyzed from a single approach, in this case the qualitative approach, demonstrating that both approaches (qualitative and quantitative) can be in fact complementary.

The research was of a descriptive exploratory type and used two types of participants, the participants of the focus groups, whose contribution was the main one for the research, and with the people who filled out the questionnaire composed of the scale of myths about love complemented with 3 open questions, whose information and contribution was meant to complement and support the data obtained in the focus groups. Theoretical sampling was used, with a number of participants that leads to theoretical saturation in the case of the focus groups and was non-probabilistic and intentional (Deslauriers, 2004). The sample was chain or network sampling, also called "snowball" (Flick, 2007).

Among the strategies used were focus groups, which had the purpose of bringing people together to share beliefs, ideas and feelings about romantic love and VAW, to provide information relevant to the research and also products, another strategy was the reduced version of the scale of myths about love created by Bosch in 2009 and validated in Colombia and Mexico (see table 1), which consists of 7 items and 2 dimensions, the first dimension being the idealization of love (items 1, 2, 3, 6 and 10) and the second dimension the love-abuse linkage (items 8 and 9) which has a Likert-type response format from 1 to 5, ranging from completely disagree to completely agree, with an Alpha of 0. 69 in the dimension of idealization of love and 0.77 in the dimension of love-abuse bonding.

Table 1: Dimension and items of the love myths scale.

Dimensions	Dimension of idealization of love	Dimension of the love-abuse linkage
Items	1. Somewhere out there, there is someone predestined for each person (better half). 2. The passion of the early days of a relationship should last forever. 3. True love can do anything. 6. Jealousy is a test of love. 10. Love is blind.	8. You can love someone that you mistreat. 9. You can mistreat someone you love.

Source: Own elaboration

Both strategies were validated by different experts, and a matrix of categories was created with A priori categories (general, primary and secondary categories) and emerging categories (sub-categories, indicators, and the construction based on the theoretical framework and the discourse of the research participants, which emerge from their relationship with the a priori categories).

IV. Results

The results of the research were organized according to the research question and its objectives;

© 2022 Global Journals

there are results from the focus groups and the questionnaire (scale of myths about love and open-ended questions). The focus groups from which the information obtained was obtained were conducted via the Google Meets platform. We worked with 4 focus groups, 2 of men and 2 of women, aged between 18 and 30 years, who participated in the study belonged to the university community. The sessions lasted between 1 hour and 15 minutes to 2 hours and the questionnaire had a reach of 257 people.

Among the sociodemographic data obtained, of the total number of participants, 75% (193) were women and 25% (65) men, of whom 25% (63) were between 18 and 21 years old, 42% (109) between 22 and 25 years old, and 33% (86) between 26 and 30 years old; of the total, 61% (157) belonged to private universities, while 39% (101) belonged to public universities (see Table 2).

Table 2: Frequency and percentage of participants by sex, age and university.

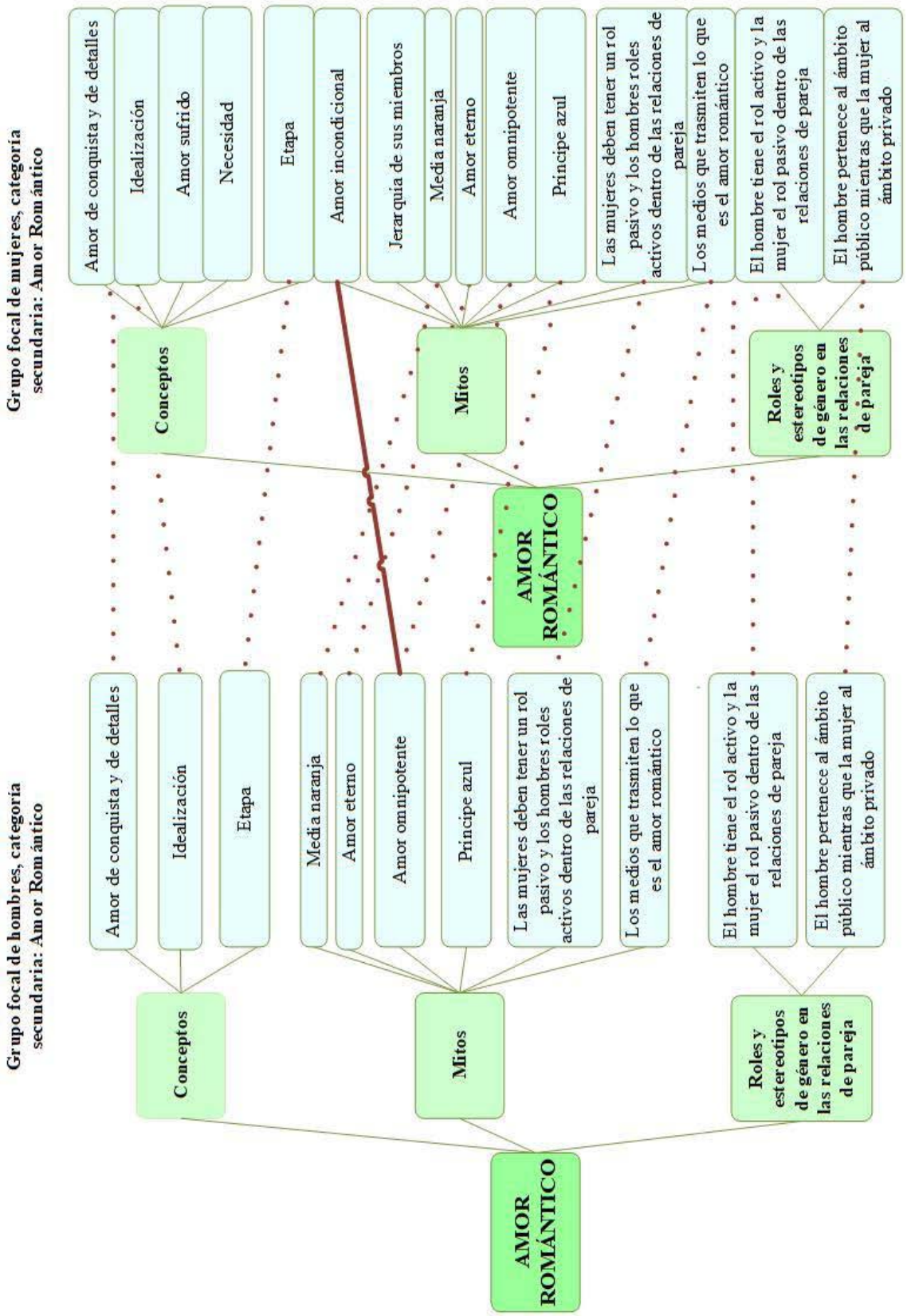
Sex		Women		Men	Total
	Frequency	193		65	258
	Percentage	75%		25%	100%
Age range		18-21 years old	22-25 years old	26-30 years old	
	Frequency	63	109	86	258
	Percentage	25%	42%	33%	100%
University		Private		Public	
	Frequency	157		101	258
	Percentage	61%		39%	100%

Source: Own elaboration

Among the categories analyzed in the focus groups were: love, holistic love, romantic love, gender roles and stereotypes, and VcM, for which cognem trees were made, in addition to the contribution of the form with the romantic love myths scale and 3 open-ended questions.

© 2022 Global Journals

The cognem tree for the Romantic Love category is presented below:



Source: Own elaboration

Figure 1: Focus groups of men and women, category: romantic love.

© 2022 Global Journals

In the above cognem tree, A priori concepts such as *beliefs, norms and constructs about romantic love*, and emergent concepts such as *Love of (in the context of) conquest and of details, a stage and the idealization* can be seen in both focus groups (of men and women), while the indicator of suffering love, and a the necessity of love, emerged only in the focus groups of women, which were not associated with any other within the cognem tree. In the case of myths, the A priori indicators, were*: the love myths scale (some of its items), information about romantic love myths, and myths and their importance in couple relationships*. The emerging indicators were: *Unconditional love, the better half, eternal love, omnipotent love, Prince Charming, women should have a passive role and men active roles within couple-relationships and, the media transmitting what romantic love is,* all of them, present within the focus groups of both men and women, While in the women's focus groups, *necessity and the hierarchy of its members* emerged, which were not associated with any other indicator present, the indicator of *unconditional love* also emerged, which was related to that of *omnipotent love.*

In the case of gender roles and stereotypes in couple relationships, the A priori indicators were: *beliefs about competencies, capacities, emotions, behaviors, behaviors and attitudes designated by society to each person according to their sex in couple relationships*, which at the time of conducting the focus groups and analyzing their grid, resulted in these new indicators: *Men have the active role and women the passive role within couple relationships, and men belong to the public sphere while women belong to the private sphere,* (both emerged in the focus groups of both men and women).

With respect to VAW and the open-ended question that was asked, it can be seen that among the concepts of VAW that were obtained from the questionnaires, 40% mentioned in their answers the types of VAW that exist, 21% spoke of VAW as an exercise of power, 13% did not answer the question, 9% gave different attributions to VAW, 7% mentioned gender roles and stereotypes related to VAW, 6% spoke about the rationalization of VAW, 5% spoke about the naturalization of VAW, 5% spoke about the naturalization of VAW, and 13% did not answer the question, 9% gave different attributions to VAW, 7% mentioned gender roles and stereotypes related to VAW, 6% talked about the rationalization of VAW, 5% talked about the naturalization of VAW and the sociocultural context, and 0% (1) gave answers out of context (see Table 3).

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage of responses to the question: What do you consider VAW to be?

Types	Attribu-tions	Exercise of power	No response	Out of context	Normalization and socio-cultural context	Gender roles and stereotypes	Rationalization of VAW
121	28	65	38	1	14	20	17
40%	9%	21%	13%	0%	5%	7%	6%

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the question "What do you consider to be VAW? By sex, the answers provided in the questionnaire, the highest percentage is found in people who mentioned the types of VAW, with 38% in men and 40% in women followed by the exercise of power, with 26% in men and 20% in women, people who did not respond with 14. 9% in men and 12% in men, attributions to VAW with 6.8% in men and 10% in women, gender roles and stereotypes with 4.1% in men and 5% in women and finally responses out of context, with 0% in men and women (see Table 4).

Table 4: Frequency and Percentage of responses to the question: What do you consider to be VAW? by gender

	Types	Attribu-tions	Exercise of power	No response	Out of context	Normalization and socio-cultural context	Gender roles and stereo-types	Rationaliza-tion of VAW
Man	28	5	19	11	0	2	3	6
	38%	7%	26%	15%	0%	3%	4%	8%
Woman	93	23	46	27	1	12	17	11
	40%	10%	20%	12%	0%	5%	7%	5%

Source: Own elaboration

V. Discussion

It should be noted that, in the process of this research, numerous approaches and theoretical models have been reviewed in order to address the issues raised, however, some of these are not decisive or the only conclusive ones to understand the complex dynamics in which romantic love and VAW unfold, such as the theory of Intergenerational Transmission of Violence by O'Leary (1988), which affirms the existence of a link between people's past and current violence in their relationships, i.e., if they had a past with violence,

© 2022 Global Journals

either in their family or in their relationships, this would favor the acceptance of violence and also the propensity to exercise it (Salas, 2005), because although this theory responds to some of the participants' discourses, it does not do so in its entirety nor does it cover many others.

Also, the learning theory of Bandura and Walters (1974), which postulates that learning is due to how people interact with their environments, i.e., from family, school, etc., and how they teach how people should be, what roles they should fulfill and how their relationships should be (Aroca; Bellver and Alba, 2012). These, like other theoretical postulates, analyze and construct the problems presented from another perspective and, although they provide explanations to some of the discourses, they are not applicable to all, which again makes evident the complexity of these problems, and that is precisely why it was decided to conduct this research from the gender approach, which in turn, is complemented by the ecological theory of Bronfenbrenner (2002), which argues that there is a relationship between people and their context, which in turn is influenced by broader contexts (Cortéz, 2004); people, their relationships and, in this case, VAW, are affected by culture, and it is this theory that provides the basis for understanding the multiplicity of violence in its different spheres and how it influences the different social structures.

In order to know how university men and women between 18 and 30 years of age interpret romantic love, it is necessary first to know how they conceptualize love, the types of love they know (romantic love, holistic love) and if they consider the existence of differences between them; taking into account that for both men and women, love is a feeling (in some cases only towards the partner and in others, a feeling towards any other person, and even an object), as mentioned by (Galarza et al.2005), love is difficult to define, but it is agreed that it is influenced by culture and context. Love itself generates pleasure, all people need to give and receive love, it is part of life as mentioned by Gualano (2018), love itself generates dopamine, serotonin and oxytocin, which in turn, could also explain why it becomes somewhat addictive according to (Castañeda, 2020).

Regarding whether there were differences between love and romantic love it is important to mention that a small number of people considered that there is no difference, understanding them as synonyms or being undecided about it. About holistic love, within the values attributed to it, the ones that were present for men and women were: *well-being, respect, fluid communication, love as a construction*, these factors, while *unconditionality*, is seen by men as the fact that the other person despite everything, is available to him, even though he may feel hurt by the situation, not as something reciprocal, while for women, it was identified that it is closer to putting up with, perpetuating that love cannot and should not be broken, that it should be eternal, and that from their imposed role, which neither for men or women is reciprocal; what for one is to be endured, for the other is to endure, propitiating idealizing unfair relationships and continuing to nurture the current model of love, based on gender roles and stereotypes, propitiating at the same time, an exercise of power of men over women and normalizing VAW, as Vara-Horna and López (2017) argue.

The *relationship between equals*, curiously, encompasses reciprocity, which although it is present in both sexes, for women it goes more towards values and towards being seen both as beings with the same value, without any hierarchy, and for men it goes more towards both contributing the same, from the conquest towards the economic, as an attempt to detach themselves from the gender roles and stereotypes that society has placed on them. For women there is a longing for equality, and for men, the desire to transform all these roles and stereotypes that society has been delegating to them, and the construction of stable relationships with holistic love, starts from there, to transform these parameters set by society and also to seek equality, As Herrera (2012) mentions, the current model of love overrides men's emotions and puts them in the role of conquerors and providers, which they must fulfill in order to maintain their supposed masculinity, which distances them from *holistic love*. *Understanding and acceptance of the other* emerged only on the part of men and could be associated in a certain way to unconditionality in some cases, showing the need to be understood and accepted for what they are as people, which also implies moving away from these roles and stereotypes set by society, where the man should not show emotions and should be the "macho" of the relationship, he seeks to be simply who he is and being as he is, to be accepted and loved by his partner, this for this participant, is a value attributed to *holistic love.*

For women, *growth*, which is a little closer to the concept of holistic love, in which both individuals grow together, implicitly shows the unconditional factor, the curious thing is that despite approaching the concept of full love as such, it seems to be implicitly recorded what society has imposed with its gender roles and stereotypes, and in the case of many women, is to put the other above her and her welfare, it is like wanting to grow with the partner and at the same time accept whatever comes, which leads to questioning: how much is it healthy to accept? Since according to Vara-Horna and López (2017), acceptance to violent behaviors is greater when they are mild and are linked to subordination and a greater rejection arises in the face of physical violence, which reaffirms the findings of this research. Among the barriers that hinder or hinder *holistic love*, for men are *pride and the comfort zone*, which are interpreted as an impediment to

© 2022 Global Journals

communication and in which, according to them, women are considered proud and should be insisted upon and it is that pride that prevents them from communicating, as (Bonelli, 2016) argues, the prevailing gender roles and stereotypes, correlate in some way with attitudes on the part of women, which could even lead to psychological violence before these.

This could be related to what was previously stated about gender roles and stereotypes imposed by society, in which women have a passive role and men an active role, in this case, complementing with more answers from the same person, with the idea that women feel comfortable being the conquered, those who do not write first, and have an imposed ideal in their heads, which they do not want to change, and that is, that for society, This weight of always having to be the one who is looking for a man does not please men either, it leans towards the myth of Prince Charming and the princess, the princess waiting quietly for her prince to arrive, she idealizes him, and the prince goes through a series of obstacles until he gets to her, which apparently and according to some discourses in this research, does not please men, reaching again the same conclusion: stereotypes and gender roles, not only harm women, but also men.

In the case of women, *previous histories and people outside the relationship and the differences between the members of the couple* are important, love is learned, and by normalizing certain behaviors, and by being familiar with them they allow them, that is, if they have had partners who have been for example violent, This indicator also refers to the people who get involved in the relationship, which can range from infidelity to friends and relatives who interfere in the relationship. In summary, it could be said that for most people, love is different from romantic love and at the same time, this is different from holistic love, although for many people also, romantic love is sometimes a synonym of holistic love, noting the confusion about concepts that those who participated have.

Within the interpretation of romantic love, the "*love of conquest and details*" has special weight, which emerged in men and women, this love is understood as: "*a love with flowers and chocolates*", it is understood as the love that is given with signs of affection through gifts and the love that is seen in movies, etc., the last answer is important, because it encompasses, that apart from believing that romantic love is a love of details, it is being linked to idealization and how it becomes a danger. These details can become a danger when this model of love is idealized, as some participants mentioned, no matter what happens, if your partner apologizes and gives you details, these details could lead to VAW, because they are an important part of the cycle of violence, specifically the honeymoon; because they are so internalized and idealized and are an end to be had, they can justify VAW.

Another important component is the conquest factor, more than anything else present in the discourse of men, in which most of them, sustain that it is the conquest falls on them and supposes a burden for them, again this rejection of men towards gender roles and stereotypes established by society arises. Idealization as a concept shared by men and women participating in this research, and understood as an idealization, as can be noted, this concept is linked to the details and conforms the concept used in this research, which sees it as: "*a sociocultural construction in which the other is idealized and which is nourished by gender roles and stereotypes established and normalized by society*" which coincides to a large extent with the concepts given by those who participated in the research, but in turn, it also encompasses the other concepts proposed by the participants of the research.

In the case of women, the concepts of *suffering love* and *love as a necessity* emerged, these concepts were backed up by the responses to the open-ended question "What do you consider romantic love to be?" on the questionnaire. These concepts argue that romantic love is unconditional and unreciprocated. The discourses were striking and even more so if we take into account that they only emerged as an indicator from the women in the focus groups and that they are reaffirmed by the answers of the women who filled out the questionnaire, which is that for many women, loving is synonymous with suffering, suffering in relationships is normalized, and it is in a certain way justifying suffering for the sake of a greater good, in this case the ideal of love, propitiating VAW as Vara-Horna and López (2017) argue, it is this love plagued by gender roles and stereotypes that have normalized the conception of love that women have and normalizes this sort of behavior, as also mentioned by (Herrera, 2012). The aforementioned shows the relationship between romantic love and VAW, which, as Muenala (2018) and Cerro and Vives (2019) argue in their research, that the inequalities in couple-relationships and roles, gender stereotypes and myths that make up romantic love, promote VAW and normalize it, which is reaffirmed by the interpretation that the participants had about VAW.

In order to be able to talk about VAW, it was first necessary, in the case of the men's focus groups, to talk about whether violence against men in relationships exists, to find out if they believed it existed and if so, how it manifested itself, agreeing that violence against men in relationships is present, and that it occurs mostly in a psychological way, and that it is also society that is responsible for undermining this form of violence since it judges men who suffer violence, questioning their masculinity and making fun of them. The role of men in couple-relationships is that of being the dominant one, the one who in a certain way exercises power, it is normalized that a man is violent and even justified, but when some type of violence is exercised against them in

© 2022 Global Journals

couple-relationships, it is the same society which makes it invisible and ridicules these men who are victims of violence, so if they are made invisible and judged unfairly, it is normal that some men prefer to be on the side of the privileged victimizer, the role of the "macho" instead of being on the side of the ones who are judged and ridiculed by society, Bonelli (2016) argues this in her research on the invisibilization of violence against men in relationships, explaining how gender roles and stereotypes are related to the exercise of violence against them by women and society.

Once this topic was addressed, we proceeded to talk about VAW, drawing attention to the fact that for women, there are more types of VAW than for men, despite the fact that they talked about the fact that the greatest type of violence exercised towards them was *psychological violence*, when the topic of VAW was brought up, men did not mention it, but women did, even encompassing all other types of violence, highlighting sexual violence, understood not only as *sexual violence*, but also as an exercise of power; as if men believe they have power over women and also power and decision making over their bodies, such as whether or not to use contraceptives, this is also violence, as stated in Law 348 and in turn by Quispe, Limo and Runzer (2020) in their research on the association between the use of contraceptive methods and domestic violence in Peru.

The discourse argues that VAW also occurs among women, whether among women's partners, even among other women, whether they are close or not, and that many times, as other participants also argue, women can be their own worst enemies, the ones who judge and harm the most, and this is an important discourse that also provides a new perspective on this issue and could also explain why VAW continues to grow and be justified, and that perhaps unwittingly, women themselves often conceal the situation.

When talking about VAW, the factors that perpetuate it are important, and for women some of these were: *social mandate, minimization of VAW and the lack of knowledge of what VAW is*, noting that, as some discourses sustain, VAW is minimized, by the victim and by society, encouraging its naturalization, besides, that it has reached a point, in which many people, do not know that they are being victims of violence, this complementing the discourse that sustains that it is only violence when there are blows and marks, and that, in many cases, despite this, violence is minimized, that society blames the victims for the aggression they have suffered, which also explains why many women do not report or make visible the violence against them, instead of having support, they are judged and are also to blame for what has happened to them.

Although VAW has become more visible today, it is not given the importance it deserves, talking about VAW does not deny that other types of violence exist nor does it affirm that all men are murderers, That is precisely why in the men's focus groups we began by talking about intimate partner violence and whether they considered that there was violence against them in intimate partner relationships. VAW is simply a reality, since, according to the data, 7 out of 10 women suffer some type of violence in their lives, and as we can see in the news, femicides increase daily, and have done so more in the pandemic period, and have shown that, for women, their own homes are the places of greatest danger and that this violence is mostly perpetrated by their partners.

This topic is complex and also deals with a myriad of factors that perpetuate it, which are rooted in the feelings of each person and is something they have grown up with. This discourse, like many others, shows a particular resentment, and although it is a harsh discourse, it reflects the feelings of the specific participant, which surely is repeated in many more people, and being able to understand this, like the other speeches, is one more step towards understanding the current situation about VcM and romantic love and the relationship between them.

VI. Conclusions

According to the analysis of the focus groups of men and women and the information obtained from the questionnaires, and in response to the research question and objectives, it could be said that there is a marked difference between men and women, because although they have indicators in common, the content is different, but if it is evaluated from the different age ranges or areas of study to which the young men and women belong, all of these unify the general conclusions that emerged in this study, if evaluated from the different age ranges or the areas of study to which the young men and women in the university stage belong, all of these unify the general conclusions that emerged in this study, also affirming that certain interpretations about VAW or the belief that romantic love belongs to a specific group, to a certain social stratum or context, is a myth. The findings of this research allow us to better understand the complexity of the discourses of young university students between 18 and 30 years old in the city of La Paz, and the way in which they interpret romantic love and VAW, each discourse expressed beliefs, feelings, thoughts, opinions and ideas about these topics, opinions and ideas about these topics, and how these have been woven, forming a particular vision of this particular group, as argued throughout this research, loving is learned and love is a sociocultural construction, as are the gender roles and stereotypes that perpetuate the VAW.

According to the discourse analyzed, it was possible to identify that a discourse linked to traditional

© 2022 Global Journals

beliefs about gender roles and stereotypes still predominates. In romantic love, in addition to the fact that VAW is largely normalized in society, despite the fact that in many cases it is identified as something negative. Romantic love as understood by those who participated in the study, although it has its particularities, continues to be part of the constructs established and generalized by the dominant society and culture.

Gender roles and stereotypes are conducive to VAW, the role of the male provider and the "aggressive male" who cannot express emotions, are to a large extent some of the causes of the perpetuation of VAW, women who put up with that and believe that they should be unconditionally in love and men who believe that the partner should be unconditionally in love with them, the lack of faith in the justice system and society with prejudices against the masculinity of men and the gaslighting of men who are victims of violence by their partners. While some important causes that perpetuate VAW have been found here, there are also causes of inequality and unhappiness for both men and women and causes that keep people away from holistic love and from feeling good about themselves and their lives, that is why there is an evident need to ponder on these things and to bring about changes.

It is crucial to emphasize that in this research, the indicators of love (in general) for men and women were the same, although some were addressed in different ways, they had a common point, love has always been present in people's lives and it seems that it will always be, perhaps today love has become a danger for many women, and perhaps many of them are aware of this danger and many others are not, perhaps many women are looking for a change in their lives and in their relationships and perhaps many others feel comfortable with this danger, perhaps many women are looking for a change in their lives and in their relationships and perhaps many others feel comfortable with some things as they are as in the subject of conquest and the role of men as those who carry the baton, perhaps some men have some privileges that the exercise of power give them and they do not want to lose them, perhaps many others want to have healthy relationships, in which they can express themselves and make their emotions known and also why not, the role of providers, imposed by society and culture so long ago, but what this research wanted to achieve, beyond imposing absolute truths, was to encourage reflection, that is also why it was conducted from the gender approach.

Knowing how young people between 18 and 30 years of age interpret romantic love and VAW, the age range chosen for this study had the intention of collecting affirmations, encounters and reflections, that would help to understand what is happening in our reality, taking into account that the majority of femicides are perpetrated by young people between these ages. does romantic love really explain the increase in femicide figures? Or is it one of the many possible explanations? Delving into this issue is the only thing that could provide answers, but according to what has been analyzed in this study, the relationship is close and there are men who believe that a principle of love is that the other person is unconditional, as there are women who believe that loving means being unconditional, and people of both sexes who idealize love, and many others who do not find the difference between love and romantic love and who accept the link between love and violence, as people who believe that love must be suffered. All these beliefs must be reflected upon, people must stop being guided by what is "common" and what societies have imposed, they must realize why they take the attitudes they take and perform the acts they do, question themselves and try to find an understanding of their situation in order to find their own well-being.

Love is learned, love, roles and gender stereotypes are nothing more than social constructions, they vary according to time and place, and as some discourses argue, it is through previous generations that we know what we know now and how one should behave according to their sex and what role should have within their relationships, but throughout the research conducted, what the researcher has put of oneself into it and what has been learned in the process, we come to the conclusion that the past should be seen as a learning experience, in the sense that it gives guidelines of what has happened, how it has been done and what could be wrong, what has not worked and what has had negative repercussions. This past and the previous generations, and societies and cultures should be seen with a lens, a lens of reflection, and no longer as a manual to be followed. Love, once again, must lead people to empower themselves, not to be suffering for anyone and even less a danger, *holistic love* must be differentiated from *romantic love,* VAW must no longer be justified or normalized, and for that, it is necessary to see its possible causes, attack the root of the problem and promote full and healthy relationships and people, and this and each of the concepts that are presented here and that do harm and generate inequality, must be deconstructed.

It is crucial to see the importance that context gives to romantic love, what it is understood by this and what myths it accepts, potentiates and how this influences the perpetuation of couple-relationships that have exercises of power of men over women. In itself, to understand what happens in our environment, should provide the basis and shed light on what should be done in the future and how to make it work, if couple-relationships are not satisfactory or equitable, they should be rethought, as Derrida (2019) says the key is to deconstruct, understanding this term not as the

© 2022 Global Journals

opposite of building, i.e. destroying, but, analyzing what shapes and sustains these beliefs, which is its structure and which are its pillars, it also implies having the capacity to remember what has made these beliefs consolidated and in the future not to make that mistake again, and the way to do it is to understand, to understand what is the basis that has cemented the concept of romantic love today and from this understanding, to start working on it and deconstruct it, to begin to work on it and deconstruct it in order to have healthy relationships, based on a holistic form of love, in which beyond their sex, people benefit and can be empowered, so that someday, hopefully not too far away, love can grow and be empowered and never again, as it has been so far, be an imminent source of danger, especially for women.

For all of what was mentioned above, change and progress in equality is linked to structural and profound changes, which are not only achievements in the legal, social and economic spheres, but also a liberation from all that has been learned and the erroneous beliefs that are held, such as love as a necessity, It is common for women who succeed in other aspects or non-traditional roles and who are independent, to feel incomplete if they do not have a partner, and it is romantic love that is the cause, which full of gender roles and stereotypes creates frustration and supports the idea that women are dependent people. It is hard work, but it is possible to break away from all these erroneous beliefs fostered by society. The sole purpose of life is not to get a partner, especially if we take into account that many of these relationships are unhealthy, because the moment in which people are empowered and take control of their lives, is the moment in which they can discern, choose, and see clearly what is real and what is not, it is at that moment in which they can transcend.

While there are already achievements at different levels, and VAW is more visible than before, culture and society are responsible for showing not only the theory but also the practice and show how it is experienced, and this daily life shows a clear increase in femicides. Culture and society have been weaving the current concepts of VAW and romantic love; it is something constructed, and therein lies the answer, if people have generated the current reality, they can also change it. Having active roles, regardless of gender, questioning and governing their lives and being able to discern between what is imposed by society and what can really be beneficial is an important point, letting go of the erroneous belief that women are or should be submissive or are incapable or belong to the private sphere and that men should be providers and *"macho"* men who do not reflect their emotions is rewriting history. The change and revolution is seen in culture, in everyday life, and reaches the whole of society and its bases, bases that must change and abandon the patterns of domination and exercises of power; the change is generated by people who are wholesome and love each other from their completeness, with relationships in which there is no hierarchy, in which roles can be explored and do good and are not perpetuated by prejudices, people who are empowered, grow, have a *holistic love* or know new ways of loving, and thus also, the VAW will reduce.

In synthesis, it can be said that there are differences between men's and women's interpretations of *romantic love* and VAW, and that these remain linked to traditional concepts that are unsatisfactory for both sexes and that perpetuate VAW, therefore the deconstruction of these concepts is necessary for profound changes in regards to these issues.

References Références Referencias

1. Aroca, N; et al (2012). Aprendizaje social como modelo explicativo de la violencia. *Revista Complutense de Educación*, 23(2), 487-511, https://doi.org/10.5209/rev_RCED.2012.v23.n2.40039
2. Balcazar, P;et al (2015). *Investigación cualitativa.* Universidad Autónoma del Estado de México.
3. Blanco, N; Pirela, J. (2016). La complementariedad metodológica: Estrategia de integración de enfoques en la investigación social. *Espacios Públicos*, 19(45), 97-111 https://www.redalyc.org/jatsRepo/676/67646966005/html/index.html.
4. Bonelli, A. (2016). *Violencia psicológica doméstica hacia el género masculino: una violencia invisibilizada.* VIII Congreso Internacional de Investigación y Práctica Profesional en Psicología: https://www.aacademica.org/000-044/596.pdf
5. Casares, A. (2008). *Antropología del género: cultura, mitos y estereotipos sexuales.* Cátedra.
6. Castañeda, L. (2020). La neurociencia y el amor. *GACETA Facultad de Medicina*. http://gaceta.facmed.unam.mx/index.php/2020/02/14/la-neurociencia-y-el-amor/
7. Cerro, M; Vives, M. (2019). Prevalencia de los mitos del amor romántico en jóvenes. *OBETS Revista de Ciencias Sociales*, 14(2). https://doi.org/10.14198/OBETS2019.14.2.03
8. Cortéz, M. (2004). La herencia de la teoría ecológica de Bronfenbrenner. *Innovación educativa*, 14 (51-65). http://hdl.handle.net/10347/5016
9. Craig, G. (2009). *Desarrollo Psicológico.* Pearson.
10. Deslauriers, J.-P. (2004). *Investigación Cualitativa.* Papiro.
11. Flick, U. (2007). *Introducción a la investigación cualitativa.* : Morata.
12. Galarza, eet al (19- 22 de septiembre de2005). [Cambios culturales y desigualdades de género en el marco local-global actual] X Congreso de Antropología de la F.A.A.E.E. Sevilla, España
13. García, Hernández y Monter (2019). *Amor romántico entre estudiantes universitarios (hombres y mujeres),*

© 2022 Global Journals

una mirada desde la perspectiva de género.: La Ventana.
14. Gualano, C. (16 de marzo de 2018). *Reflexiones feministas sobre el amor romántico. EL Clarín.* https://www.clarin.com/entremujeres/pareja/reflexiones-feministas-amor-romantico_0_By27vtStf.html
15. Herrera, C. (2012). El amor romántico perjudica seriamente la igualdad. Geolocalización
16. Herrera, C. (2020). *La Construcción Sociocultural del Amor Romántico.* Fundamentos.
17. Jahan, S. (19 de Noviembre de 2018). *La violencia contra las mujeres: causa y consecuencia de desigualdad.* Programa De Las Naciones Unidas Para El Desarrollo (PNUD): https://www.undp.org/es/blog/la-violencia-contra-las-mujeres-causa-y-consecuencia-de-desigualdad
18. López, I. (2007). *El enfoque de género en la intervención social.* Cruz Roja.
19. Lupano, M. L. (2010). Psicologia positiva: Analisis desde su surgimiento. Ciencias psicológicas IV (1): 43-56. http://www.scielo.edu.uy/pdf/cp/v4n1/v4n1a05.pdf
20. Miranda, B. (09 de Agosto de 2019). *Feminicidios: la preocupación en Bolivia por ser el país de Sudamérica en el que matan a más mujeres.* BBC NEWS. https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias-america-latina-49293051
21. Miranda-Novoa, M. (2012). Diferencia entre la perspectiva de género y la ideología de género. *Universidad de La Sabana*, Vol. 21(2), http://www.scielo.org.co/pdf/dika/v21n2/v21n2a02.pdf
22. Programa Regional ComVoMujer. (2018). *Combatir la violencia contra las mujeres en Latinoamérica.* Lima: GIZ.
23. Quispe, R., Limo, M., & Runzer, F. (2020). Asociación entre el uso de métodos anticonceptivos y violencia doméstica contra la mujer en edad fértil en Perú. *Anales de la Facultad de Medicina*, Vol. 81(1). http://dx.doi.org/10.15381/anales.v81i1.16667
24. Salas, L. (2005). Transmisión intergeneracional de la violencia intrafamiliar: evidencia para las familias colombianas. *Red de Revistas Científicas de América Latina, el Caribe, España y Portugal*, Desarrollo y Sociedad, (56) 285-337, https://www.redalyc.org/pdf/1691/169114671008.pdf
25. Vara-Horna, A; López, D. (2017). *Sí, pero no. La aceptación implícita de la violencia contra las mujeres en Perú.* Lima: Facultad de Ciencias Administrativas y Recursos Humanos de la Universidad de San Martín de Porres.

© 2022 Global Journals