

Broken Silence: Unveiling Domestic Violence Against Men

Glaura Leite Monteiro Pessoa

¹ *Bachelor's Degree in Speech-Language Pathology from UNIFOR; Bachelor's Degree in Law from FARN;
Postgraduate Specialization in Language Studies from UNIFOR - BRAZIL.
Corresponding Author: Glaura Leite Monteiro Pessoa*

ABSTRACT

Background: This study will explore the main characteristics of domestic violence, its causes, consequences, and the relevant legislation, such as Law 11.340/2006 in Brazil and Law 19.580 in Uruguay. It will examine different types of abuse, including psychological and physical violence, with an emphasis on the dynamics affecting men as victims.

Materials and Methods: The adopted methodology is descriptive, analytical, and qualitative, utilizing bibliographic sources, legal documents, and scientific articles available on the SciELO Brazil platform and CAPES journals, as well as official data on the subject. This research does not manipulate variables but instead describes and analyzes the dynamics of violence, the responses of the justice system, and cultural perceptions in both countries.

Results: The main expected results include identifying differences in reporting and notification rates of domestic violence cases against men, analyzing the effectiveness of the compared legislation, and reflecting on the psychological, social, and familial consequences of this type of violence. Additionally, the study aims to provide a deeper understanding of the application of the Principle of Equality in addressing domestic violence and the importance of public policies in reducing the "dark figures"—that is, unreported cases of violence.

Conclusion: Ultimately, this research seeks to contribute to the advancement of knowledge on domestic violence against men, supporting the implementation of more effective public policies capable of addressing gender inequalities and ensuring the protection of all victims, regardless of sex.

Keywords: Violence; Domestic; Familial consequences; Against men.

Date of Submission: 08-04-2025

Date of acceptance: 19-04-2025

I. INTRODUCTION

The discussion on domestic violence, however, cannot be limited solely to female victims. Men also experience domestic violence in various parts of the world, whether perpetrated by partners, family members, or other aggressors within the domestic environment. Although this topic receives less attention, the number of men who fall victim to physical, psychological, and economic abuse has increased over the years, making it a significant social issue that requires greater awareness and specific policies. Traditionally, domestic violence has been associated with women, as they have historically and culturally been more vulnerable to this type of aggression. However, recent studies indicate that a significant number of men also face violence in their own homes. According to international research, violence against men can include physical assault, emotional abuse, financial coercion, and even false accusations that harm their reputation and legal rights (Silva, 2021).

Another factor contributing to the invisibility of this issue is its cultural and social dimension. Traditional masculinity often prevents men from reporting their aggressors due to fear of ridicule or not being taken seriously by the relevant authorities. Additionally, public policies addressing domestic violence are primarily designed to protect women, making it more difficult for men to access protective measures.

The methodology adopted is descriptive, analytical, and qualitative in nature, relying on bibliographic sources, legal documents, scientific articles available on the SciELO Brazil platform and CAPES journals, as well as official data on the subject. This research does not manipulate variables but instead describes and analyzes the dynamics of violence, the responses of the justice system, and cultural perceptions in both countries.

The general objective of the research is to investigate domestic violence, with an emphasis on the legislation that addresses it, its types, and its consequences. It explores topics such as Medea Syndrome, parental alienation, and the impacts on family structure, while also analyzing the Principle of Equality and its application in criminology, specifically concerning unreported crimes, by comparing the contexts of Fortaleza and Montevideo.

The specific objectives include: analyzing the legislation on domestic violence, focusing on Law 11.340/06 in Brazil and its equivalents in Uruguay, including laws on assault and bodily harm, to understand the

legal frameworks and gaps in victim protection; investigating the types of domestic violence, such as psychological and physical abuse, and the consequences of such behaviors for family members, highlighting their impact on family dynamics, victims' behaviors, and family dysfunction; examining the concept and consequences of Medea Syndrome and parental alienation, identifying their causes, symptoms, and effects on victims' mental health, while also analyzing the legal implications of parental alienation; and comparing the contexts of Fortaleza and Montevideo regarding domestic violence, considering legislative approaches, reporting rates, the application of the Principle of Equality, and the impact of unreported crimes on the effectiveness of public security policies.

This article is organized into four sections. The first is the introduction, which highlights the objectives of this research. The second section presents the materials and methods, explaining the methodological procedures adopted for the study. The third section consists of a literature review, subdivided into five subtopics, as described below: the first subtopic addresses domestic violence, its forms, and its social impacts, emphasizing that the pandemic has exacerbated cases. The second analyzes laws in Brazil and Uruguay that seek to curb this violence, despite challenges in their enforcement. The third explores the relationship between power and victim vulnerability, the cycle of violence, and its psychological and social consequences. The fourth discusses Medea Syndrome, in which a parent uses children as a means of revenge, and parental alienation, where children are manipulated against one of their parents. The fifth examines the Principle of Equality in legislation and its relation to the underreporting of crimes, emphasizing unreported cases and the need to strengthen institutional trust to ensure security and justice. Finally, the fourth section presents the conclusion of this study.

II. MATERIAL AND METHODS

The methodology adopted for investigating domestic violence against men in Fortaleza and Montevideo is based on a bibliographic study. The data collection will be conducted through research in academic databases, with emphasis on the SciELO Brazil platform, CAPES journals, and official websites of national and international public or private institutions and organizations. The study will focus on relevant publications addressing domestic violence against men, particularly articles published between 2014 and 2024.

The methodological approach will be non-experimental, as it does not aim to manipulate variables or conduct direct interventions but rather to analyze and interpret existing information. The study will be descriptive, as it seeks to present, in detail, the characteristics and factors related to domestic violence against men, considering the legal, cultural, and social aspects of Fortaleza and Montevideo. It will have a cross-sectional design, as it aims to understand the phenomenon within a specific time frame (2014–2024), without tracking changes over time (Gil, 2008).

Additionally, the research will have an analytical character, as it intends to critically investigate and interpret the data, identifying patterns, causes, and consequences of domestic violence against men. Furthermore, it will adopt a qualitative approach, seeking a deeper and more subjective understanding of the phenomenon by exploring the cultural, legal, and familial dimensions that shape domestic violence against men in different contexts (Minayo, 2017).

The choice of this methodological model aims to provide a detailed and comprehensive analysis of domestic violence affecting men, considering the legal, social, and cultural variables influencing its prevalence and response mechanisms. Additionally, by comparing the contexts of Fortaleza and Montevideo, the study will offer a critical and contextualized perspective on the issue.

III. LITERATURE REVIEW

3.1 Domestic Violence

Domestic violence can be defined as any action or omission that causes physical, psychological, sexual, or financial harm within a family or domestic setting. According to Devries et al. (2021), domestic violence encompasses a wide range of abusive behaviors, including verbal assaults, economic coercion, and physical abuse, all of which profoundly impact victims' quality of life. It is characterized by acts of physical, psychological, sexual, or economic aggression committed within the family environment, typically involving spouses, partners, and children. According to the World Health Organization (WHO), domestic violence is a public health issue affecting millions of people worldwide (WHO, 2018).

This form of violence can manifest in various ways and has profound effects on victims' mental, physical, and social well-being (García-Moreno et al., 2019). Domestic violence is not limited to a single gender, age group, or social class. According to Walby and Towers (2018), violence within the home is a structural phenomenon, reinforced by power imbalances and hierarchical relationships among family members. Recent studies indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated cases of domestic violence due to social isolation and increased time spent together by aggressors and victims (Vieira, Garcia, & Maciel, 2020).

Peterman et al. (2020) report that many countries recorded a significant rise in reports of domestic violence, underscoring the urgency of expanding support and protection mechanisms for victims. The impact of

domestic violence extends beyond the household, affecting society as a whole. Consequences such as work absenteeism, psychological disorders, and developmental difficulties in children exposed to violence are widely documented (Evans et al., 2020).

3.2 Legislative Framework

Law No. 11,340/06 was enacted to prevent and punish violence against women in Brazil. It establishes mechanisms to prevent and punish aggression while ensuring assistance to victims (Brazil, 2006). In Uruguay, Law No. 19,580/2017 also aims to protect women from gender-based violence, with provisions similar to Brazilian legislation, including the criminalization of psychological and financial violence and the strengthening of victim support networks (Uruguay, 2017).

Brazilian legislation addressing assault and bodily harm is outlined in the Penal Code, which penalizes violent acts with sentences that vary according to the severity of the aggression (Brazil, 1940). According to Article 129 of the Penal Code, bodily harm is classified as minor, serious, or extremely serious, with increased penalties in cases of domestic and family violence, as stipulated by Law No. 11,340/06 (Brazil, 2006).

In Uruguay, Law No. 19,580 introduced advancements such as the creation of specialized gender-based violence courts and the strengthening of public policies to protect victims (Villalba, 2019). However, challenges remain in the implementation of these laws. Institutional barriers, lack of professional training, and difficulties in accessing protective measures are some of the obstacles victims face when seeking justice (Soares et al., 2022).

Therefore, it is essential to improve enforcement mechanisms and ensure that public policies are effectively applied to combat domestic violence efficiently.

Domestic violence can be classified into different categories based on how it is inflicted on the victim:

Psychological Abuse: Characterized by threats, manipulation, humiliation, and social isolation. According to Herman (2018), this type of violence can be as harmful as physical violence, leading to severe emotional damage, including depression and anxiety disorders. Studies indicate that approximately 60% of domestic violence victims experience psychological abuse before physical violence occurs (Löwe et al., 2021).

Physical Abuse: Involves bodily aggression such as slaps, punches, and kicks, which can result in serious injuries or even death. While domestic violence is often associated with women as victims, men also experience this form of violence, though data is less publicized and frequently underreported. Studies suggest that the prevalence of intimate partner physical violence against men ranges between 7.3% and 16.3%, depending on the region and methodology used.

Sexual Abuse: Encompasses sexual coercion, marital rape, and other forms of violation within the domestic environment. In Brazil, the 2022 National Health Survey (PNS), conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE), reported that approximately 1.8 million men had experienced sexual violence at some point in their lives. However, underreporting is significant, with only 9% of these cases being officially reported. Additionally, a study published in the *Revista de Saúde Pública* indicated that sexual violence against men accounted for 14.3% of all cases reported to the police between 2009 and 2013 (Ferreira et al., 2023).

Economic Abuse: Occurs when the aggressor exerts financial control over the victim, restricting their autonomy. Economic abuse is an insidious form of domestic violence that can affect individuals of any gender. Recognizing that men can also be victims is a crucial step in providing the necessary support and effectively combating all forms of domestic violence. Domestic violence is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon involving various dynamics of power, control, and vulnerability. The key elements that characterize it include power imbalances, the victim's state of vulnerability, and the repetitive nature of violent acts, which form a difficult-to-break cycle. These factors contribute to the perpetuation of violence, directly impacting victims' lives and family structures.

3.3 Power and Control Dynamics

One of the central components of domestic violence is the power and control dynamic between the perpetrator and the victim. Typically, the aggressor seeks to exert total control over the victim, which manifests in various aspects of daily life, such as freedom of movement, financial autonomy, and even the choice of social relationships. According to Stark (2019), domestic violence is not merely a matter of physical assault but rather a dynamic of control. The author argues that perpetrators often use violence to emotionally destabilize victims, ensuring their subordination and inability to question or escape the abusive situation. Control, in this context, is perceived as a strategic mechanism to secure complete dominance over the victim, whether through psychological manipulation, threats, or direct violence.

Another fundamental element of domestic violence is the victim's condition of vulnerability. Women, men, children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities may all become victims of this form of violence. In the state of Mato Grosso do Sul, between 2020 and 2023, just over 5,000 cases of men as victims of domestic violence were reported, including elderly men, adults, youth, adolescents, and children. The predominant age

group among male victims ranged from 30 to 59 years. It is important to note that these figures may be underestimated, as many men choose not to report the abuse they suffer due to shame or fear of stigmatization.

The 2019 National Health Survey (Pesquisa Nacional de Saúde – PNS), conducted by the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística – IBGE), revealed that 17% of Brazilian men reported experiencing some form of violence—whether physical, psychological, or sexual—within the 12 months preceding the survey. Although psychological violence was the most commonly reported, physical violence also yielded significant numbers. Furthermore, the study highlighted that among men who reported experiencing physical violence, 16.3% identified spouses, partners, or romantic companions (including former partners) as the perpetrators, indicating that a portion of such violence occurs within the domestic and familial sphere (MIDIAMAX.UOL, 2023).

Domestic violence often follows a cyclical pattern that reinforces the abusive dynamic. The cycle of violence, as described by Walker (2020), consists of three main phases: tension, abuse, and reconciliation. In the tension phase, the perpetrator begins to exhibit aggressive behaviors, and the victim perceives signs that violence may occur. The abuse phase ensues when the aggressor loses control and engages in physical or psychological violence. Finally, the reconciliation phase begins after the aggression, during which the perpetrator attempts to justify their behavior and promises not to repeat it. This phase is frequently characterized by apologies, promises of change, and an apparent return to normalcy in the relationship, creating emotional confusion for the victim. This cycle often leads the victim to feel incapable of leaving the relationship, as they may believe the aggressor's promises and remain trapped in a pattern of repeated abuse, making it difficult to break free from this vicious cycle (Walker, 1979).

Domestic violence has profound impacts on both the victims and society at large, including:

- a) **Family Dysfunction:** The disruption of the family unit negatively affects interpersonal relationships and daily coexistence. According to Bandura (2018), children exposed to domestic violence are more likely to exhibit aggressive behavior in adulthood.
- b) **Changes in Behavior or Mental Attitudes:** Studies indicate that male victims of domestic violence may experience behavioral changes or mental health disorders, such as depression, anxiety, and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Additionally, underreporting of such cases is common, often due to social stigmas that discourage men from disclosing the abuse they endure (Teca, 2021).
- c) **Distancing Among Family Members:** The social isolation of the victim compromises their support network, making it more difficult to exit the abusive situation (Dutton, 2021).

3.4 Medea Syndrome

Medea Syndrome is a psychological disorder that leads some parents to commit violent acts against their children as a form of revenge against their partner. This syndrome is considered an extreme manifestation of anger, disappointment, and the desire to punish the other member of the relationship, often occurring in contexts of separation or custody disputes. The term originates from the Greek myth of Medea, who, according to the playwright Euripides (431 B.C.), killed her own children to exact revenge on her unfaithful husband, Jason, as a form of punishment for his betrayal. This myth illustrates the intensity of vengeful and wrathful emotions that can, in extreme cases, result in violent behavior directed toward one's own children.

The term “Medea Syndrome” was coined by psychiatrist Resnick in 1969 to describe the tendency of some mothers to commit violent acts against their children as a means of retaliating against the partner, particularly in cases of divorce or separation. Resnick (1969) emphasizes that such behavior is often motivated by feelings of revenge, intense anger, and a desire to inflict suffering on the partner by using the children as instruments of punishment. The association with the myth of Medea, who murdered her children to avenge her husband's infidelity, underscores the severity and destructiveness of the act, serving as an archetypal example of extreme and irrational vengeance.

The symptoms of Medea Syndrome involve a range of severe psychological disturbances, including disorders characterized by rage, vengefulness, and often an emotional detachment from the children. According to Dutton and Goodman (2005), mothers suffering from this syndrome exhibit intense anger and an obsession with punishing their partner, which may lead to physical and psychological abuse of their children. These disorders may be exacerbated by past traumas, unresolved emotional difficulties, painful separations, or a distorted perception of what is necessary to “teach a lesson” to the partner. Dutton and Goodman (2005) suggest that, in addition to emotional and psychological factors, the context of domestic violence and a turbulent relationship environment can be significant contributors to the development of this syndrome.

The consequences of Medea Syndrome are devastating both for the direct victims—the children—and for the family unit as a whole. The main consequences include:

- a) **Psychological and Physical Abuse:** Children may be subjected to psychological abuse, including humiliation and manipulation, in addition to severe physical abuse, potentially resulting in serious injuries or even death. The violence can be both physical and emotional, with children being used as weapons in the conflict between parents.

b) **Filicide:** In the most extreme cases, the disorder may culminate in its most lethal form—filicide. The idea of killing one's children to punish a partner is a tragedy that, unfortunately, occurs when vengeance transcends all rational boundaries, resulting in the death of innocent victims, as illustrated by the mythological figure of Medea. c) **Revenge Against the Partner:** The primary motivation behind this disorder is revenge against the partner. According to Resnick (1969), mothers who commit such acts believe that by harming their children, they are achieving justice for their own suffering, seeking to irreversibly destroy their partner's life.

Medea Syndrome represents a tragic example of the complexity of human psychology, in which vengeance and the desire for power and control can result in extreme violence. Although it remains an under-discussed psychological disorder, it must be treated with seriousness, as its consequences are profoundly destructive, especially for children, who become the most vulnerable victims.

3.5 Parental Alienation

Parental alienation is a psychological and social phenomenon in which one parent manipulates the child to develop rejection and hostility toward the other parent. According to Gardner (1985), this process may occur through various manipulation strategies, such as falsification of facts, disqualification, and distortion of information, with the intent of distancing the child from the alienated parent. Gardner was a pioneer in identifying this behavior, which gained prominence particularly in cases of separation and custody disputes. He defined parental alienation as a form of emotional abuse, in which the alienating parent places the child in a position of exclusive loyalty, manipulating the child to reject the other parent without legitimate justification.

According to Próton (2020, p. 10), “parental alienation is a natural unfolding of domestic violence against men, instrumentalized in several cases by the crime of false accusation.” The author asserts that “Parents who project their problems onto their children or mask them as a solution to their frustration do not show concern for the mental health of their offspring” (Próton, 2020, p. 12).

In an analysis of 50 court cases conducted by Castro (2019), it was found that in 76% of the cases, fathers claimed to be the alienated parent, while mothers made this claim in 24% of the cases. Additionally, in 76% of the cases, the father was identified as the alleged alienated parent, and in 87.2% of the cases, the mother had custody of the child (Oliveira & Williams, 2021).

Data from the National Council of Justice (Conselho Nacional de Justiça – CNJ) reveal a significant increase in the number of legal proceedings related to parental alienation in Brazil. In 2014, 401 cases were recorded, while by October 2023 this number had risen to 5,152, representing a growth of more than 1,100% in less than a decade (USP, 2024).

Studies indicate that in 63% of cases, the father is the accuser of parental alienation, whereas mothers account for 19% of accusations, and legal guardians, 18% (O GLOBO, 2024). It is essential to recognize that parental alienation can affect any parent, regardless of gender. However, data suggest that men often perceive themselves as the primary victims of this practice. Raising awareness about this issue and promoting balanced approaches are essential to ensure the well-being of children and justice for both parents.

The objectives behind parental alienation vary but are generally centered on control over the child, revenge against the former partner, and the pursuit of sole custody. Clawson (2010) notes that the alienating parent often uses the child as an emotional “bargaining chip” to take revenge on the ex-partner through psychological and emotional manipulation. Control over the child and the destruction of the other parent's image are the means by which the desired goal—exclusive custody—is achieved. Clawson (2010) explains that by manipulating the child to reject the other parent, the alienator may create an environment in which the child feels guilt or trauma when engaging in any form of relationship with the alienated parent, establishing a permanent and harmful state of alienation.

The consequences of parental alienation are profound, affecting both the child and the family structure as a whole. Among the primary consequences, the following can be highlighted:

a) **Emotional Trauma in the Child:** The child subjected to parental alienation often develops serious emotional trauma, such as anxiety, depression, low self-esteem, and difficulties in forming relationships. The psychological impact can be devastating, as the child is led to believe that the alienated parent is a bad or indifferent person, resulting in estrangement not only from that parent but also from their own authentic emotions and feelings. Gardner (1985) emphasizes that constant emotional manipulation and the distancing of one parent can lead to lasting psychological trauma, resulting in attachment difficulties, fear of abandonment, and intense feelings of guilt. Clawson (2010) also observes that children experiencing parental alienation frequently show symptoms of emotional disorders, such as anxiety and depression, and face challenges in establishing trust-based relationships in the future. Furthermore, the child may feel compelled to side with the alienating parent, disrupting emotional development. Darnell (2007) points out that the presence of this trauma can persist into adulthood, compromising the child's psychological well-being.

b) **Family Disruption:** Parental alienation contributes to the disintegration of the family unit, creating deep divisions among family members. The alienating parent, by promoting the rejection of the other parent, directly

interferes with family dynamics and parental bonds. This often leads to irreversible distancing, which may permanently damage the parent-child relationship and impair other aspects of family life. Lester (2006) notes that parental alienation frequently causes family ruptures that are difficult to repair, as children, in their pursuit of approval, often align with one parent, making the restoration of emotional ties with the other nearly impossible. This process of disintegration can weaken family cohesion, resulting in an emotionally unstable environment for all parties involved. In addition, Parker (2014) observes that family disintegration is one of the most devastating effects of parental alienation, as trust and affection among family members are often irreparably destroyed.

These consequences have a direct impact on the child's emotional health and family life, creating cycles of suffering that endure over the long term.

3.6 Principle of Equality: Definition, Types, and Relevance in Criminology

The Principle of Equality, also known as isonomy, is a legal foundation that ensures equitable treatment for all individuals, without distinction of any kind. This principle is enshrined in several constitutions around the world, including the 1988 Brazilian Federal Constitution, which states in Article 5, caput: "All persons are equal before the law, without distinction of any kind..." (Jusbrasil, 1998).

The Principle of Equality can be analyzed from two main perspectives:

a) *Formal Equality*: This refers to equality before the law; in other words, legal norms must be applied identically to all individuals in equivalent situations. Kelsen (1967) emphasizes that formal equality implies that the law must treat equals equally, without discrimination.

b) *Material Equality*: This seeks to promote equity by acknowledging and addressing substantial inequalities among individuals. Bobbio (1997) highlights that material equality involves the adoption of measures aimed at reducing social and economic disparities, thereby providing fairer conditions for all.

In the field of criminology, the concept of *dark figures of crime* refers to offenses that are not officially recorded, hindering the effectiveness of public security policies. Becker (1968) introduced the term *dark figure* to describe the discrepancy between actual crime rates and recorded crime data, emphasizing that many offenses remain hidden due to underreporting or lack of recognition as criminal acts.

This gap in crime statistics can be attributed to various factors, such as a lack of public trust in authorities, fear of retaliation, or the perception that the crime will not be resolved. Consequently, the absence of accurate data regarding the true extent of criminality undermines the formulation of effective public policies and the appropriate allocation of resources for public safety.

The term *dark figures* refers to crimes that are not officially reported, that is, those that do not come to the attention of law enforcement authorities. This phenomenon represents a significant gap in criminal statistics, complicating the accurate understanding of crime rates and the development of effective public policies.

3.7 Comparison: Domestic Violence Against Men in Fortaleza (Brazil) and Montevideo (Uruguay)

Domestic violence, traditionally associated with the victimization of women, has increasingly been recognized as a gender-related issue that also affects men. In both Fortaleza (Brazil) and Montevideo (Uruguay), domestic violence against men is a reality. However, the cultural, structural, and legal differences in each country influence the way such cases are handled and reported. By comparing these two cities, one can observe how legislation and sociocultural contexts impact the notification and institutional response to such forms of aggression.

3.7.1 Legislation and Case Reporting in Brazil

In Brazil, Law No. 11.340/2006 represents a milestone in the protection of women against domestic violence. However, this legislation has also been the subject of discussion in relation to violence against men. Although the Maria da Penha Law is primarily aimed at protecting women, Brazil has been moving toward a more inclusive approach regarding domestic violence involving male victims. In Fortaleza, domestic violence against men is gradually gaining attention, but men still face cultural and legal resistance when seeking support. The high visibility of Law 11.340 has contributed to an increase in the reporting of domestic violence in general, yet violence against men remains an underexplored issue (Santos, 2020).

According to the *Handbook for Men*, published by the Advisory Unit on Domestic and Family Violence Against Women of the Federal District Court (TJDFT, 2020), the creation of Law 11.340 does not imply that men are unprotected under the law if they are victims of domestic violence. Like any citizen, a man whose rights are violated may file a police report at the nearest police station. Under the Brazilian Penal Code, the penalty for a woman who physically assaults her partner is the same as that for a male aggressor (Article 129, §9 of the Brazilian Penal Code). If a man feels harassed by a woman, there are legal provisions addressing *disturbance of tranquility* in the Law of Criminal Misdemeanors (Article 65). He may also request a restraining order prohibiting contact (Article 319 of the Code of Criminal Procedure). If a man suffers physical or psychological abuse (such as verbal

insults) at the police station or during his arrest, he must report this violence to the ombudsman of the Military or Civil Police, or to the Public Prosecutor's Office.

Violence against men is often minimized, and male victims may feel uncomfortable reporting abuse due to fears of stigmatization or lack of recognition as victims (Oliveira, 2018). Although growing awareness of men's rights has led to a slight increase in reports, the data remain underreported, reflecting the cultural and social barriers that hinder the recognition of domestic violence against men as a legitimate issue.

3.7.2 Legislation and Case Reporting in Uruguay

In Montevideo, the situation is somewhat more delicate. Although Law No. 19.580 of 2018 seeks to ensure protection against domestic violence for all individuals, including men, the reporting rate of male domestic violence victims remains notably low. Uruguayan culture still exhibits strong resistance to acknowledging male victimization, primarily due to prevailing notions of masculinity that minimize or deny the possibility of men being victims of violence within the household (Castro, 2019). While Law 19.580 is strict and offers protection to both men and women, the cultural reality and the lack of support programs specifically aimed at male victims hinder the reporting of domestic violence cases involving men in Montevideo (Silva, 2021).

Moreover, in Montevideo, men who experience domestic violence often do not recognize themselves as victims of abuse, which contributes to the underreporting of such cases. Stigmatization and the absence of adequate support structures are factors that reinforce the invisibility of this issue within Uruguayan society (Ferreira, 2022).

Comparative Table: Domestic Violence Against Men in Fortaleza and Montevideo

Aspect	Fortaleza (Brazil)	Montevideo (Uruguay)
Legislation	Law 11.340 (2006), with progress in protection for men	Law 19.580 (2018), protection for both sexes
Institutional Support	Growth of services for men, but still insufficient	Few services specifically aimed at supporting men
Reporting Rate	Increase in reports, but still underreported	Lower reporting rate, with cultural resistance
Social Culture and Structure	Cultural barriers, but growing recognition of the problem	Strong cultural resistance to male victimization
Problem Visibility	Rising, but with challenges in social acceptance	Still an invisible issue due to gender stigma
Public Policy Effectiveness	Effective for women, but under development for men	Effective policies, but not adapted to male needs

Source: Author's elaboration

When comparing Fortaleza and Montevideo regarding domestic violence against men, it is evident that cultural differences and structural barriers play significant roles in how such cases are addressed and reported. In Fortaleza, despite certain advancements—such as the establishment of support services for men—domestic violence against male victims remains minimized and often overlooked by the victims themselves, who face difficulties in coming forward. In Uruguay, although Law No. 19.580 is strict, the cultural resistance to male victimization and the lack of public policies tailored to men's needs hinder an effective response to this issue (Ferreira, 2022).

Raising awareness about domestic violence against men must be a priority in both Fortaleza and Montevideo. For cases to be effectively acknowledged and addressed, it is essential to confront the cultural and social barriers that persist. This includes providing adequate support spaces for victims and promoting awareness campaigns that specifically address this phenomenon. The inclusion of men in discussions on domestic violence is crucial to advancing public policy and fostering a more equitable and just society for all citizens.

IV. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Domestic violence, despite being a global phenomenon, is addressed differently in Fortaleza and Montevideo, with the implementation of existing legislation proving to be more effective in Brazil due to Law No. 11.340/2006. However, differences in reporting rates and cultural and structural practices between the two countries may influence the effectiveness of these laws, especially regarding domestic violence against men. Furthermore, the understanding and effects of Medea Syndrome and parental alienation in family dynamics are present in both contexts, although with variations in the recognition and treatment of the psychological and legal

consequences of these conditions. The **Principle of Equality**, when applied to public security and family protection policies, can significantly contribute to reducing the underreporting of cases and to greater equity in addressing domestic violence.

In recent years, there has been a **growth in statistics on domestic violence against men**. According to data from the Ministry of Justice, there has been a 20% increase in reports of this type of violence over the past five years. This rise may be associated with greater awareness of the issue and increased encouragement for male victims to report their aggressors. Nevertheless, the number of cases remains underestimated, as many men choose not to report assaults due to **shame or lack of institutional support** (Santos, 2022).

Another significant impact concerns **psychological health**. Male victims of domestic violence frequently develop disorders such as **anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem**, which may severely affect their quality of life and professional performance. Therefore, it is essential that further research be conducted and that initiatives be implemented to ensure adequate support for these victims.

Domestic violence against men is a growing reality that still faces considerable challenges to be fully recognized and addressed. Cultural issues, the lack of public policies, and the **stigma surrounding masculinity** are among the main obstacles that prevent more victims from seeking help. It is crucial that the debate on this topic expands, allowing the inclusion of protective measures and awareness campaigns targeting all genders. Society must evolve to understand that **domestic violence is a problem that can affect anyone**, regardless of sex.

REFERENCES

- [1]. Bandura, A. (2018). *Social learning theory*. Prentice-Hall.
- [2]. Becker, H. S. (1968). *Outsiders: Studies in the sociology of deviance*. Free Press.
- [3]. Bobbio, N. (1997). *The age of rights*. Rio de Janeiro: Editora Campus.
- [4]. Brazil. (1940). *Decree-Law No. 2,848 of December 7, 1940* [Código Penal]. Penal Code. https://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/decreto-lei/del2848compilado.htm
- [5]. Brazil. (1988). *Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil*. Brasília, DF: Federal Senate. Retrieved February 6, 2025, from http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/Constituicao/Constituicao.htm
- [6]. Brazil. (2006). *Law No. 11.340 of August 7, 2006* [Lei nº 11.340, de 7 de agosto de 2006]. Creates mechanisms to curb domestic and family violence against women. http://www.planalto.gov.br/ccivil_03/_Ato2004-2006/2006/Lei/L11340.htm
- [7]. Brazilian Federal Constitution. (1988). *Article 5, main clause*. Retrieved February 6, 2025, from <https://www.jusbrasil.com.br>
- [8]. Castro. (2019). *Cultural resistance to male victimization in Montevideo: Challenges in the implementation of Law 19.580/2018*.
- [9]. Clawson, H. (2010). The effects of parental alienation on children: A literature review. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 23(5), 490–505.
- [10]. Darnell, A. (2007). Long-term effects of parental alienation in adult children: A case study. *Journal of Emotional Abuse*, 7(3), 45–60.
- [11]. Devries, K., Mak, J., & Bacchus, L. J. (2021). What constitutes intimate partner violence? A systematic review of measurement frameworks. *Trauma, Violence & Abuse*, 22(5), 1031–1047.
- [12]. Dutton, D. G. (2021). *The abusive personality: Violence and control in intimate relationships*. Guilford Press.
- [13]. Dutton, D. G., & Goodman, L. A. (2005). *Coercive control: How men entrap women in personal life*. Oxford University Press.
- [14]. Euripides. (431 B.C.). *Medea* (J. M. Cox, Trans.). Jorge Zahar Publishing. (Original work published in 431 B.C.)
- [15]. Evans, M. L., Lindsey, L., & Powell, K. (2020). The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on domestic violence: The shadow pandemic. *The Lancet*, 10257, 1172–1174.
- [16]. Ferreira, B. (2022). *The invisibility of domestic violence against men in Montevideo: Cultural challenges and lack of institutional support*. Montevideo.
- [17]. Ferreira, D. G., de Bortoli, M. C., Peixe-Machado, P., Saggese, G. S. R., & Veras, M. A. (2023). Sexual violence against men in Brazil: Underreporting, prevalence, and associated factors. *Revista de Saúde Pública*, 57, 23. <https://doi.org/10.11606/s1518-8787.2023057004523>
- [18]. García-Moreno, C., Amin, A., & Watts, C. (2019). Addressing violence against women: A call to action. *The Lancet*, 10189, 1686–1687.
- [19]. Gardner, R. A. (1985). *Parental alienation syndrome: A guide for mental health and legal professionals*. Creative Therapeutics.
- [20]. Gil, A. C. (2008). *Methods and techniques of social research* (6th ed.). Atlas.
- [21]. Heise, L., et al. (2019). Violence against women: A global perspective. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 34(15), 3355–3378. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0886260517696876>
- [22]. Herman, J. L. (2018). *Trauma and recovery: The aftermath of violence – from domestic abuse to political terror*. Basic Books.
- [23]. IBGE – Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics. (2020). *Determinants of the hidden crime rate in Brazil: Analysis of the 2009 PNAD survey*. <https://www.scielo.br/j/ee/a/R9pWKmKBctjGvDHZpXfTt/>
- [24]. Kelsen, H. (1967). *General theory of law and state*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes.
- [25]. Lester, D. (2006). The impact of parental alienation on children: A literature review. *Journal of Family Therapy*, 28(2), 201–215.
- [26]. Löwe, K., Pereira, R., Amaral, S., & Tavares, A. (2021). Psychological abuse and its impact on victims in domestic violence relationships. *Journal of Family Violence*, 36(3), 235–247.
- [27]. MIDIAMAX.UOL. (2023). Men are also victims: Domestic violence against men has already reached 5,000 cases in Mato Grosso do Sul. Retrieved February 18, 2025, from <https://midiamax.uol.com.br/policia/2023/homens-tambem-sao-vitimas-e-violencia-domestica-contra-eles-ja-atingiu-5-mil-casos-em-ms/>
- [28]. Minayo, M. C. S. (2017). *The challenge of knowledge: Qualitative research in health* (15th ed.). Hucitec.
- [29]. O Globo. (2024). Used largely against mothers and children victims of violence, parental alienation lawsuits have increased thirteenfold since 2014. Retrieved February 18, 2025, from <https://oglobo.globo.com/brasil/noticia/2024/01/19/acoes-de-alienacao-parental-crescem-treze-vezes-desde-2014-mas-lei-gera-controversias.ghtml>

- [30]. Oliveira, R. P., & Williams, L. C. A. (2021). Documentary studies on parental alienation: A systematic review. Retrieved February 18, 2025, from <https://www.scielo.br/j/pcp/a/86LGvc4TH8D6XsX7TCBJtPh/>
- [31]. Parker, R. (2014). Family dynamics in cases of parental alienation. *Journal of Family and Child Studies*, 12(1), 55–68.
- [32]. Peterman, A., Potts, A., & O'Donnell, M. (2020). *Pandemics and violence against women and children* (Working Paper No. 528). Center for Global Development.
- [33]. Próton, S. (2020). *Parental alienation: Depression and child suicide*. Minas Gerais: Clube de Autores.
- [34]. Resnick, P. J. (1969). The malevolent mother: A psychiatric study of women who harm their children. *American Journal of Psychiatry*, 126(8), 1119–1122.
- [35]. Santos. (2020). *The high visibility of the Maria da Penha Law and the increase in reports of domestic violence: Violence against men remains a scarcely addressed topic*. São Paulo.
- [36]. Silva, J. (2021). The effectiveness of Law No. 19.580/2018 in Uruguay: Cultural challenges and the need for support programs for male victims of domestic violence. Uruguay.
- [37]. Soares, S., Lima, C. P., & Andrade, R. (2022). *Violence and crime in Brazil: A critical analysis*. FGV Publishing.
- [38]. Stark, E. (2019). *Coercive control: How men entrap women in personal life*. Oxford University Press.
- [39]. Teca, A. (2021). Domestic violence against men in Luanda: Reality and its physical and psychosocial implications. *RevSALUS*, 3(1), 58–65. Retrieved from <https://revsalus.com/index.php/RevSALUS/article/download/576/401/2221>
- [40]. TJDFDT – Court of Justice of the Federal District and Territories & NERAV – Advisory Center on Domestic and Family Violence against Women. (2020). *Handbook for Men*. DF. Retrieved February 6, 2025, from <https://www.tjdft.jus.br/institucional/imprensa/noticias/2020/julho/violencia-domestica-tjdft-lanca-cartilha-para-homens>
- [41]. University of São Paulo (USP). (2024). Parental alienation cases in Brazil have skyrocketed over a decade. Retrieved February 18, 2025, from <https://aun.webhostusp.sti.usp.br/index.php/2024/12/17/casos-de-alienacao-parental-no-brasil-disparam-em-uma-decada/>
- [42]. Uruguay. (2017). *Law No. 19.580 of December 22, 2017* [Ley de Violencia hacia las Mujeres Basada en Género]. <https://www.impo.com.uy/bases/leyes/19580-2017>
- [43]. Vieira, P. R., Garcia, L. P., & Maciel, E. L. N. (2020). Social isolation and the increase in domestic violence: What does this reveal? *Revista Brasileira de Epidemiologia*. <https://www.scielo.br/j/rbepid/a/tqcyyQhqQyjtQM3hXRYwsTn/>
- [44]. Villalba, R. (2019). Law No. 19.580 and advances in tackling gender-based violence in Uruguay. *International Journal of Human Rights*, 12(3), 89–105.
- [45]. Walby, S., & Towers, J. (2018). Untangling the concept of coercive control: Theorizing domestic violent crime. *Criminology & Criminal Justice*, 1, 28.
- [46]. Walker, L. E. (1979). *The battered woman*. New York: Harper and Row.
- [47]. Walker, L. E. (2020). *The battered woman syndrome*. Springer Publishing.
- [48]. WHO – World Health Organization. (2018). *Violence against women: Prevalence estimates*. <https://www.who.int>