

# Violent intimate relationships of Brazilian women in Portugal

## Relaciones íntimas violentas de mujeres brasileñas en Portugal

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**Abstract**

This study aims to understand the intimate experiences of immigrant Brazilian women living in Portugal, and also to characterize possible victimization experiences in their intimate relationships. The empirical base was constituted by 114 immigrant women, and the results show that the intimate experiences of these women are marked by violence episodes both in Portugal and in Brazil. The most frequent types of violence were psychological and verbal violence, with these practices occurring more than once in their intimate relationships. When experiencing violence episodes, these women do not seek help and do not file a formal complaint, which legitimizes and reinforces the victimization to which they are subjected. This study intends to contribute to the development of action strategies that lead to the real protection of immigrant victims and to challenge the greater risk that immigration can entail in the lives of immigrant women, especially for victims of intimate violence.

*Este estudio tiene como objetivo conocer las experiencias de intimidad de mujeres inmigrantes brasileñas residentes en Portugal, así como caracterizar posibles experiencias de victimización en sus relaciones íntimas. La base empírica fue constituida por 114 mujeres inmigrantes, y los resultados muestran que las experiencias íntimas de estas mujeres están marcadas por episodios de violencia tanto en Portugal como en Brasil. La violencia psicológica y la verbal fueron los tipos más frecuentes, ocurriendo estas prácticas más de una vez en sus relaciones íntimas. En la vivencia de estos episodios estas mujeres no buscan ayuda ni presentan una denuncia formal, lo que refuerza la victimización a que son sometidas. Se pretende que este estudio contribuya al*

*desarrollo de estrategias de acción que conlleven a la protección real de las víctimas y desafiarnos al riesgo que la migración puede conllevar en la vida de las inmigrantes, en especial para las víctimas de violencia.*

Migration; gender; violence; intimate relationships; Brazilian women  
*Migración; género; violencia; relaciones íntimas; mujeres brasileñas*



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## 1. Introduction

Gender violence in intimate partner relationships represents a serious, highly prevalent, and preventable public health problem worldwide. It is one of the most common forms of violence against women, conceptualized as a social ideology and historically represented since always<sup>1</sup> (European Institute for Gender Equality, 2016; Neves & Costa, 2017). In the last decades gender violence focused on intimate relationships has been demonstrating the inequality between sexes, devaluing the female sex (Moreira & Costa, 2020), giving her a lower status comparing to men, and an inherent vulnerability, both at personal and at social levels (World Health Organization, 2014). It is reported that all forms and consequences arising from gender violence in intimate relationships affect the victims' freedom and rights. Therefore, this phenomenon can be considered one of the biggest attacks on human rights in the current era (United Nations, 2020).

Gender violence in intimate partner relationships is a persistent phenomenon with multiple causes, forms and effects (Park et al., 2021). According to the World Health Organization (2012), violence is a behaviour that causes damage to the health and well-being of individuals, and can be directly related to physical, psychological, sexual (interpersonal violence), social or economic (collective violence) damage, both in the victim and in his or her family. These acts can occur by a current or former intimate male partner, whether cohabiting or not (Breiding et al., 2015).

Intimate partner violence affects thousands of women and young girls around the world and it has been recognized as a global pandemic (United Nations, 2020). Its prevalence can be molded by social, economic, and cultural backgrounds, but it is nonetheless extended to all demographic groups (Miller & McCaw, 2019). A follow-up World Health Organization (2021) found that 35% of women worldwide had experienced physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner or non-partner sexual violence in their lifetime and that most of these women did not disclose nor seek any type of service related to their experiences.

The recognition of this form of violence stemmed largely from the consolidation of gender as a social category, but also from the involvement of women and the critical contribution

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1 Istanbul Convention, Article 3.

of feminist perspectives (Dias, 2017). However, this perspective does not allow the study of the differences between diverse groups of women and is still not sufficient to understand the dynamics and the impact of the violence on immigrants' victims (El-Abani et al., 2018).

Migration has proved to be a positive experience for millions of women and their families, as the displacement to a new country exposes women to new ideals and social norms that can promote their rights (Bastia & Piper, 2019). However, as many national and international studies have revealed, migration can reinforce the gender asymmetries and reproduce mechanisms of discrimination and oppression (Annoni, 2020; Cabecinhas, 2020; Gonçalves & Fonseca, 2020; Gonçalves & Matos, 2016; Silva, 2015), especially if integration policies are oriented exclusively towards accommodating the society of origin and satisfying the needs of the migratory purpose (Sousa, 2020).

Intimate partner violence (IPV) impacts 1 in 3 women, but immigrant and undocumented women are particularly vulnerable to intimate partner violence as abusers often use their undocumented partner's immigration status as a means of control (World Health Organization, 2021). The intersection of immigrant status with other dimension (e.g., poverty, social isolation, ethnicity, socioeconomic status) increase women's vulnerability to victimization. Thus, the migratory process is often exploited to perpetrate multiple types of violence (Menjívar & Salcido, 2002; Silva et al., 2020) that may negatively affect migrant women's lives (European Network for Migrant Women, 2019).

The structural nature of violence against immigrant women has been recognized in several national and international directives. At the European Commission, the National Strategy for Equality and Non-Discrimination (ENIND) assumes the guidelines of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Woman (CEDAW), taking into account the specific needs of women who have, in some way, one or more disadvantages.

Violence against women has called on States to develop Action Plans and Measures in the sense of prevention, but also in the sense of response or rehabilitation in situations of actual occurrence, and so this study could be able to assess important elements about the way how Brazilian women, in Portugal, live their intimate experiences, and contribute to the formulation of more efficient, and protective strategies adapted to the needs of these women.

In today's global world, women's international migration is one of the most striking phenomena of migratory flows and is becoming more significant in most countries (United Nations, 2019). However, most countries still do not have a data system that gathers disaggregated information by sex and that differentiates the different types of movements (Montero, 2020; United Nations, 2019). And migratory studies do not fully recognize the interaction between the experiences lived by immigrant women and the structural conditions that frame these mobility processes, hiding the multiple vulnerabilities that these women face throughout their lives and migratory trajectories (Neves et al., 2016).

In Portugal, the number of immigrant Brazilian women represents 55.8% (Foreigners and Borders Service, 2021), but the knowledge about their experiences of intimacy is still scarce. Thus, this study pretends to deepen the knowledge about the way how Brazilian women, in Portugal, live their intimate experiences and characterize possible victimization experiences in their intimate relationships.

## 2. Antecedents for understanding the experience of violent intimate relationships of immigrant women

In the last decades, migration studies with a gender perspective started to emerge in the Portuguese academia, however the investigation of intimate partner violence among immigrant women has made little progress in Portugal (Gonçalves & Matos, 2020; Silva et al., 2021). Indeed, evidence from previous works (e.g., Dias et al., 2013; Duarte & Oliveira, 2012; El-Abani et al., 2018; Piper et al., 2017; Phillimore et al., 2021; Premji & Shakya, 2017; Sabri et al., 2020) reports that immigrant women are identified as being more vulnerable to this practice, discrimination, and IPV-related homicides (Sabri et al., 2018), especially aggravated by factors such as legal status, social class, nationality, culture, or ethnicity (Collins, 2017).

As it is extensively described in the literature, the conditions of the migratory process and the social, structural, and cultural factors inherent to it may be strong predictors for the multiple victimization of immigrant women in the receiving countries (Annoni, 2020; Gonçalves & Fonseca, 2020; Marchetti, 2018; Ramos, 2021; Silva et al., 2020). This concept of multiple victimization emerges in the literature in the 80s (Sparks, 1981) and, even though it is a concept of difficult consensus, it shows that one type of violence is almost always associated with others and that a single experience of a type of abuse rarely occurs (Caridade et al., 2019). Therefore, it emerges as a product of marginalized positions that immigrant women are forced to assume and that often lead them to be subjected to multiple forms of violation of their rights (Silva et al., 2020).

A study conducted in Portugal that assessed the prevalence of multiple victimization revealed that 66.4% of immigrant women had already experienced multiple victimization, and 12.1% were victims of a single victimization experience, occurring in 47.7% of immigrants in the post-migratory period, being the most frequently reported types of victimization in Portugal the psychological violence, discrimination, institutional victimization, and labour violence (Gonçalves & Matos, 2020).

The study of Dias et al., (2013) represents a scientific milestone in Portugal. Focused on the three largest communities in Portugal (Africans, Brazilians, and Eastern Europeans), the study reveals that 11.4% of immigrant women have already suffered from psychological violence, followed by physical (7.1%), and sexual violence (1.6%) in their family contexts, being this perpetuated in 43.9% of the cases by their intimate partner, and in 17.5% by family members.

Indeed, the intrinsic social vulnerability of immigrant women associated to their professional instability, irregular situation, exclusion, and/or social isolation puts them in a more favourable position to discrimination, victimization (Oliveira et al., 2017; Silva, 2015; Silva & Neves, 2022; Vergueiro et al., 2019), and, not infrequently, poverty situations (Oliveira & Gomes, 2018). Besides, the difficulty associated with the regular immigration process can lead these women to resort to clandestine immigration networks, increasing the risk of exploitation, violence, abuse, and trafficking (Figueiredo et al., 2018; Rosário et al., 2011).

Such women may be recruited through false promises of well-paid jobs abroad, with the exploiters then using different forms of abuse to intimidate their victims (European Union, 2021). In Portugal, trafficking victims for the purpose of sexual exploitation were, in 2018, mostly from Brazil (Internal Security System, 2018). The study by Dias and Ramos (2019) on the expressions and experiences of gender violence in immigrant Brazilian women also por-

trays this double condition of fragility, by reporting that 90.0% of these women have already suffered violence because they are women and immigrants.

Several studies have concluded that Brazilian women in Portugal are particularly vulnerable to preconception, discrimination, racism, and sexism experiences, which come in forms of violent and unwanted physical sexual investments (Campos et al., 2018; Oliveira Assis, 2020; Dias & Ramos, 2019), both at public and private places (Piper et al., 2017; Premji & Shakya, 2017), that threaten, disturb, and intimidate these women, affecting their well-being and their sense of belonging to the Portuguese community (França & Padilla, 2018).

The generalized and stereotyped portrayal of Brazilian women associated, not only with prostitution, but also with clandestinely, crime, and exploitation negatively influences their migratory experiences (Costa & Ruviaro, 2020). Brazilian women's representation by the Portuguese press, associated to their exoticization and sexualization, and with attempts at legalization through fraudulent practices, like convenience marriage, reproduces and perpetuates a reductive image of their attributes and skills, that enhances the increase of conflict in their intimate relationships and, sometimes, their rupture (Gaspar et al., 2017, 2021; Queirós, 2018).

A transversal study conducted by Campos et al. (2018), with 682 Brazilian women in Portugal, showed that 11.2% of these women have already been a victim of violence from strangers, 6.4% from bosses or hierarchical superiors, 3.4% from official agents, 3.1% from ex-husbands, 2.4% from ex-boyfriends, and 1.6% from boyfriends. From these, only 44.7% reported that they asked for help.

The barriers to access to health, justice, education, social services and/or labour market (International Organization for Migration, 2022), and the lack of knowledge regarding the functioning of specialized services, their rights, and the phenomena of gender violence itself, leads to victims not seeking help or medical assistance (Dias & Ramos, 2019; Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 2009). Also, cultural barriers, isolation, insecurity, fear of being deported or lose their children, economic dependence, family and social exposure to violence, and shame prevent them from reporting the violence suffered or abandoning the abusive relationship (Dias et al., 2013; Duarte & Oliveira, 2012).

The control practiced by the perpetrators when going out, in technological devices, and in the victim's contacts with friends and/or family members makes it more difficult to ask for help (Douglas et al., 2019), situation especially aggravated by the measures taken to control it (e.g., protective measures and confinements, temporary impediment to national and international mobility) adopted during the COVID-19 pandemic (Dias et al., 2021; Marques et al., 2020). These measures have significantly changed the lifestyles of individuals giving rise to situations multiple vulnerabilities for the immigrant's women's (Fundamental Rights Report, 2021; International Organization for Migration, 2022; Lessard-Phillips et al., 2021; Mahabir et al., 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic had exposed the magnitude of existing inequalities in societies (European Commission, 2020). Recent data show that in April and June 2020, there was a significant increase in immigrant women who resorted to the National Network of Support for Victims of Domestic Violence (RNAVVD), increasing the number of requests for help from 8% to 26% (República Portuguesa, 2020). According to the last statistical report from the Migrant Victim Support and Discrimination Unit, in 2018, 305 immigrant victims were received. Of these, 64.6% were received within the scope of domestic violence and were female

(68.7%). The most presented nationality among these victims was the Brazilian, representing 37% of the total number of victims (Portuguese Association for Victim Support, 2019).

Recently, through the partnership between the High Commission for Migrations (ACM) and the Commission for Citizenship and Gender Equality (CIG), the National Network of Support for Victims of Domestic Violence (RNAVVD) was reinforced with the opening of two assistance services to immigrant women victims of domestic violence and of harmful traditional practices, both located at the National Support Centre for Migrant Integration (CNAIM), in the cities of Lisbon and Porto, complying with the Action Plan to Prevent and Combat Violence against Women and Domestic Violence, from ENIND 2018- 2030 “Portugal + Equal” (República Portuguesa, 2020).

The Portuguese State also safeguards, in the ENIND, the intersectional perspective as the only line for the definition and subsequent execution of the entire Strategy, considering the intersection between sex/gender and other discrimination agents, like age, ethnicity, disability, nationality, sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression. While respecting, protecting and achieving the human rights of all women is framed in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Global Compact for Migration, evidence from an intersectional perspective needs to be strengthened.

### 3. Context

The number of international migrants has increased all over the world. It is estimated that there are currently around 281 million international migrants, of which 48% are women (IOM, 2022). Portugal follows this trend, which has been reflected in the increased number of immigrant people living in the country, with women occupying a prominent role in the migratory trajectory (Jerónimo, 2019; Oliveira & Gomes, 2018), and the Brazilian community a leading place. According to the most recent report by the Foreigners and Borders Service (2021), some 662.095 authorized foreign residents and citizens were living in Portugal in 2020, a 12.2% increase on the previous year. Of these, 325.972 were women and 336.123 were men, with the Brazilian community representing 27.8% of all these migrants (183.993).

Whether through family reunification or by an autonomous decision, immigrant Brazilian women decide to start a migratory process hoping for better life conditions (Ventura, 2018) and health care, acquisition of new skills, but also motivated by economic, political, and religious factors (Bértoldo & Ricardo; Dias & Gonçalves, 2007; França & Padilla, 2018). Relative to the native workers, the labour practices of Brazilian women in Portugal are characterized by more precarious labour conditions, invisible practices, putting them in more traditional roles, socially seen as destined for women (e.g., sectors such as food, hotel, and beauty) (Sousa, 2020; International Labour Organization, 2018), and they are also primarily responsible for the domestic and care work (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2018; Silva, 2015; Silva et al., 2018, 2020).

### 4. Methodological framework

We conducted a non-probabilistic sample had the following inclusion criteria: age equal or superior to 18 years; reside in Portugal; be immigrant women with Brazilian nationality; and having experienced, in the past or in the present, an intimate relationship.



A questionnaire was administered and posted online through various institutions and associations linked to the migration area in Portugal, so that this could be shared and answered by the largest number of immigrant Brazilian women. The resulting sample was constituted by 114 Brazilian women, ages between 19 and 57 years ( $M=34.4$ ,  $DP=7.66$ ).

Most women are from the North of Portugal (61.4%,  $n=70$ ), followed by Centre (19.3%,  $n=22$ ), and Lisbon (19.3%,  $n=22$ ). Concerning the civil status, 46.5% ( $n=53$ ) of women are married, 33.3% ( $n=38$ ) are single, 12.3% ( $n=14$ ) are cohabitating, and 7.9% ( $n=9$ ) are divorced. Most are in a heterosexual romantic relationship (97.9%,  $n=94$ ), and 2.1% ( $n=2$ ) are in a homosexual relationship, with the average duration of the affective relationship being 8.5 years. 69.3% ( $n=79$ ) of the participants do not have children, and 30.7% ( $n=35$ ) have minor children. Concerning educational qualifications, 43.0% ( $n=49$ ) of the participants have a Master's degree, 32.5% ( $n=37$ ) have a Bachelor's degree, 8.8% ( $n=10$ ) have a PhD, 8.8% have High School education, 4.4% ( $n=5$ ) have postgraduate studies, 0.9% ( $n=1$ ) have a technical course, 0.9% ( $n=1$ ) have attended school between the first and the fourth grades, and 0.9% ( $n=1$ ) have attended the fifth and sixth grades, or the seventh, eighth and ninth grades. Concerning the professional occupation in Portugal, 17.5% ( $n=20$ ) are unemployed, 23.7% ( $n=27$ ) are students, 9.6% ( $n=11$ ) work at the services area, 7.1% ( $n=8$ ) work in scientific investigation, 7.1% ( $n=8$ ) work in education/formation, 6.1% ( $n=7$ ) work in the restaurant or accommodation services, and 5.3% ( $n=6$ ) work in the health services. The average length of stay in Portugal is 3.2 years.

**Table 1. Sociodemographic Characterization of the Sample**

		N	M	%	SD
Age	-	114	34,35	-	7,66
Civil Status	Married	53	-	46,5%	-
	Single	38	-	33,3%	-
	Cohabitation	14	-	12,3%	-
	Divorced	9	-	7,9%	-
Educational Qualifications	Master	49	-	43,0%	-
	Bachelor	37	-	32,5%	-
	PhD	10	-	8,8%	-
	High School	10	-	8,8%	-
	Postgraduate studies	5	-	4,4%	-
	Technical course	1	-	0,9%	-
	Primary school	1	-	0,9%	-
	Fifth and sixth grades, or seventh, eighth and ninth grades	1	-	0,9%	-
Duration of the romantic relationship (months)	-	81	101,6	-	85,43
Partner's sex	Male	94	-	97,9%	-
	Female	2	-	2,1%	-

		N	M	%	SD
Children	No	79	-	69,3%	-
	Yes	35	-	30,7%	-
Number of children	1	16	-	45,7%	-
	2	16	-	45,7%	-
	3	2	-	17,1%	-
	4	1	-	5,7%	-
Children born in Portugal	0	27	-	77,1%	-
	1	7	-	20,0%	-
	2	1	-	2,9%	-
Residential area in Portugal	North	70	-	61,4%	-
	Centre	22	-	19,3%	-
	Lisbon	22	-	19,3%	-
Length of stay in Portugal (months)	-	114	38,21	-	49,96
Professional occupation in Portugal	Unemployed	20	-	17,5%	-
	Scientific	27	-	23,7%	-
	Services	11	-	9,6%	-
	Investigation	8	-	7,1%	-
	Education/Formation	8	-	7,1%	-
	Restaurant/Accommodation	7	-	6,1%	-
	Health	6	-	5,3%	-

The questionnaire, developed for this investigation, was based on previous studies and in relevant literature, and composed by five sections, namely: 1) sociodemographic characterization, 2) characterization of the motivations for immigration, 3) characterization of integration and fixation perspectives, 4) characterization of the intimate experiences, and 5) inventory about violent experiences in intimate relationships. The initial part of the measure includes the informed consent.

With an average filling time of fifteen minutes, the data collection occurred between May and September of 2020, during the pandemic period. The informed consent was given to all participants and the anonymity and confidentiality of the data used throughout the study were guaranteed. The statistical treatment of the data was executed with the IBM *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences Statistics* (IBM SPSS Statistics, version 27.0) program.



## 5. Results and Discussion

### 5.1. Migration process

Although it is generally assumed that women migrate to Portugal due to family reunification (e.g., husbands/partner/father/brothers) (Oliveira et al., 2017), nowadays they are already starting an autonomous migratory logic, being this the scenario found in one third of this study's participants. Motivated by the personal and scientific growth (62.3%,  $n = 71$ ), these women seek to acquire a higher level of qualifications in the Portuguese educational institutions. Therefore, it seems evident that the analysis of the migratory process should pay attention to gender and women's roles inside the migration processes, in order to given them visibility (Silva et al., 2020).

The socioeconomical (37.7%,  $n = 43$ ), professional (37.7%,  $n = 43$ ), and political (4.0%,  $n = 16$ ) factors pointed by the immigrant women in this study are also very important in this decision, since, like mentioned in the literature by various authors (Dias & Gonçalves, 2007; Padilla et al., 2015; Peixoto, 2007;), these are often associated with the constant economic crisis present at the origin countries and, consequently, with the high rate of unemployment (Peixoto, 2007), thus leading to the search of better future perspectives and conditions in other countries (Ventura, 2018). Therefore, there seems to be a constant pattern in the motivations of immigrant Brazilian women living in Portugal, searching for better conditions at multiple levels, both in economic and professional terms, and in terms of safety and quality of life. Only 14.0% ( $n = 16$ ) of these women mention romantic relationship as a motivation for immigration, and 8.8% ( $n = 10$ ) refer family reunification as a motive.

**Table 2. Motivation for immigration**

Motives for immigration	N	%
Personal and Scientific Growth	71	62,3%
Socioeconomic	43	37,7%
Professional	43	37,7%
Political	19	16,7%
Romantic Relationships	16	14,0%
Family Reunification	10	8,8%

For 81.6% ( $n = 93$ ) of the participants, Portugal was the first and only immigratory experience. 58.8% ( $n = 67$ ) of the participants reported having known people in Portugal at the time of the migratory process, among these people stand out their friends (55.2%,  $n = 37$ ), family members (37.3%,  $n = 25$ ), partners (7.5%,  $n = 5$ ), and ex-partners (3.0%,  $n = 2$ ). In fact, several studies, such as the Rodrigues and Cantera's (2017) study, have been concluding that support networks are important determinants both in the migratory process and in the intrafamilial and gender violence, which can contribute to women's visibility and to access different services and society sectors.

## 5.2. Difficulties found in Portugal

In Portugal, immigrant Brazilian women face several difficulties in the integration process. Corroborating the empirical evidence, both at the national and international level (International Organization for Migration, 2022; Oliveira & Gomes, 2018), one of the difficulties most highlighted by the study participants was the access to the labour market at the receiving country (55.3%,  $n = 63$ ). The overwhelming majority of these women present higher level of qualifications, but can't get a job at their qualification area and reveal difficulties in accessing the labour market, which disappoints their initial expectations. This aspect can be not only a limiting factor in the integration process, but can also contribute to the compromise of decision-making and autonomy in the intimate relationship (Silva & Neves, 2022).

The difficulties felt by Brazilian women in the regularization process (40.4%,  $n = 46$ ), residence access (34.2%,  $n = 39$ ), public services (28.9%,  $n = 33$ ), and the confrontation with cultural (26.3%,  $n = 30$ ), linguistic barriers (24.6%,  $n = 28$ ), and with differences at the climate adaptation (23.7%,  $n = 27$ ) were also conditioning aspects in the migratory process, which made Brazilian women experience an aggravation of discrimination acts, for being immigrant and for being women (Neves & Costa, 2017; Piper et al., 2017; Premji & Shakya, 2017), which may put them in risk situations and higher vulnerability and also more exposed to discriminatory practices, exploration, and victimization (Annoni, 2020). In fact, 31.6% ( $n = 36$ ) of the women felt discrimination in the migratory process. These results seem to reinforce and accentuate the migration genderization, which continues to impact the lives of immigrant women in a vastly disproportionate way.

**Table 3. Difficulties found in Portugal**

Difficulties found in Portugal	N	%
Access to the market labour	63	55,3%
Regularization process	46	40,4%
Find a house	39	34,2%
Discrimination	36	31,6%
Access to public services	33	28,9%
Cultural	30	26,3%
Linguistic	28	24,6%
Climacterics	27	23,7%

## 5.3. Characterization of the intimate experiences

Concerning the intimate experiences of Brazilian women, the study's evidence show that the intimate experiences of immigrant Brazilian women are marked by episodes of violence, both in Portugal and in Brazil, being that 34.2% ( $n = 39$ ) of the women were, or are victims of intimate partner violence. Of these, 33.3% ( $n = 13$ ) have already been victims of intimate partner violence in Portugal, and currently the number of intimate partner violence victims is 5.1% ( $n = 2$ ). 76.9% ( $n = 30$ ) were victims of intimate partner violence in Brazil, and 10.3% ( $n = 4$ ) were victims of intimate partner violence in both countries.

It appears that the increase of these intimate partner violence episodes during the migratory process, as they have been reported in the literature (Duarte & Oliveira, 2012; Silva, 2015), did not occur, which may show that these women found in migration a way of escape from a violent or oppressive intimate relationship (Bertoldo & Ricardo, 2017), which is also one of the possible reasons why they do not want to return to Brazil. Regarding the typologies of violence that women suffer, or suffered in their intimate relationships, 87.2% ( $n = 34$ ) reported psychological violence, 56.4% ( $n = 22$ ) verbal violence, 35.9% ( $n = 14$ ) stalking, 28.2% ( $n = 11$ ) sexual violence, 25.6% ( $n = 10$ ) physical violence, 20.5% ( $n = 8$ ) social violence, and 7.7% ( $n = 3$ ) economic violence.

**Table 4. Typologies of violence that women suffer**

Types of violence	N	%
Psychological	34	87,2%
Verbal	22	56,4%
Stalking	14	35,9%
Sexual	11	28,2%
Physical	10	25,6%
Social	8	20,5%
Economic	3	7.7%

The aggressor is identified as being the partner (34.2%,  $n = 39$ ), with whom the participants had, or maintain an intimate relationship and 5.1% ( $n = 2$ ) of them live currently with their intimate partner. The typologies of violence present in the intimate experiences of Brazilian women are in agreement with the literature found (Campos et al., 2018; Dias et al., 2013; Topa & Neves, 2020), since the majority of participants who suffer or have suffered violence show a higher prevalence of psychological and verbal violence, being this perpetrated, in all cases, by their intimate partner. The acts of violence that they are or have been subject in their intimate relationships lasted for months in 41.0% ( $n = 16$ ) of the cases, and for years in 38.5% ( $n = 15$ ).

The data revealed that about 72.5% of the participants who are, or were victims of intimate partner violence episodes were 30 years old, or older, which highlights the transmission of cultural values and norms that characterize the acceptance and naturalization of intimate partner violence by women (El-Abani et al., 2020), and so the need for sensibilization actions regarding violence issues is crucial in younger age groups (Dias et al., 2013; Duarte & Oliveira, 2012).

About half of the participants (51.3%,  $n = 20$ ) who are, or were victims of intimate partner violence in Portugal and in Brazil, reported that they did not reach for help. The lack of knowledge about the functioning of support services or about the actual gender violence phenomena (Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, 2009), the lack of knowledge about their rights through existing legislation in Portugal or Brazil, the fear and shame that the testimony given would not be considered reliable due to lack of evidence or the fear of being deported to their countries of origin (Dias & Ramos, 2019) can explain the fact that these women do not search for support and/or make formal complaints against their perpetrators.

Of the women who did it, 57.9% ( $n = 11$ ) contacted friends, 21.1% ( $n = 4$ ) turned to family, 21.1% ( $n = 4$ ) contacted police forces, 10.5% ( $n = 2$ ) searched victims support services, 10.5% ( $n = 2$ ) asked for help from a professional in the psychology field, and 5.3% ( $n = 1$ ) asked for the neighbours' help. Regarding complaints to the competent authorities, made by the participants victims of intimate partner violence, who perform, or performed a request for help, only 5.3% ( $n = 1$ ) made them whenever episodes of violence occurred, and 31.6% ( $n = 6$ ) presented only once. From all women who complaint, 50.0% ( $n = 2$ ) characterized the given support as moderate, 25.0% ( $n = 1$ ) as bad, and 25.0% ( $n = 1$ ) as horrible.

The negative characterization of the competent authorities' support made by these women and the difficulty felt in the access to public services, which is the case of health, can also condition the complaint process or the support request and constitute an important obstacle in facing violence. It is important to invest in the development of culturally congruent care to immigrant women victims of violence (Vergueiro et al., 2019) based on interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary strategies (Duarte & Oliveira, 2012), because the lack of help-searching from Brazilian women victims of intimate partner violence could lead to a perpetuation of these episodes through time, increasing the probability of its aggravation and, consequently, increasing the vulnerabilities to which they are exposed (Marques et al., 2020).

#### 5.4. Violent practices in intimate relationships

Exploring the prevalence of the violence practices in intimate relationships, using the Inventory about violent experiences in intimate partner relationships (Neves et al., 2014), and considering the more expressive data that women may have experienced, or experience, it was found that 55 women suffered, or suffer from violent practices in an intimate relationship. From these, 96.4% ( $n = 53$ ) were, or are criticized, insulted, maligned, or accused for no reason by the perpetrator, and 67.3% ( $n = 37$ ) was, or is ignored, despised, humiliated, shamed, or treated with indifference. Also, 56.4% ( $n = 31$ ) told they have been, or are verbally threatened or through behaviours that caused, or cause fear, and 43.7% ( $n = 24$ ) told that he controlled, or controls her way of dressing, the places she used to go, or goes, or her friendships.

Besides, 40.0% ( $n = 22$ ) of the women said that the perpetrator showed, or shows suddenly in places to watch her or control her, 38.2% ( $n = 21$ ) mentioned that the perpetrator went, or goes through her things without permission, 32.7% ( $n = 18$ ) said that the perpetrator used, or uses new technologies to threaten or blackmail, and 30.9% ( $n = 17$ ) said she was, or is forced to have unwanted sexual behaviours. Adding to these data, 23,7% ( $n=13$ ) mentioned the perpetrator did not allow them to work, study, and/or leave the house alone. The results also show that these practices occurred more than once in their intimate partner relationships.

Although the data highlight the fact that these practices have decreased with the migratory process, a curious fact that stands out from this investigation and that deserves attention, is related to the fact that women don't assume themselves as victims of intimate partner violence, either at the present time or in the past, but indicate suffering or having already suffered specific acts and behaviours of violence. This non-approximation of discourse to practice may indicate a lack of knowledge about the phenomena, about what it is to be, in fact, a victim of violence, and about the abusive behaviours that are part of the wide range of variants present in the violence episodes.

This perception of violence as a normative act of their daily lives, sometimes due to their beliefs, customs, and cultural values, will lead them not feeling the need to act in the face of this phenomenon, not seeking help. In fact, the data obtained demonstrate that more than half of the participants, in experiencing violence episodes did not seek help, and did not make a formal complaint, which may indicate the fragility of the intimate contexts, especially in pandemic period and maybe in some cases a lack of awareness of what is, in fact, an act of violence. The commitment to the development of initiatives to raise awareness of the problem is fundamental, but it is equally urgent and necessary to develop and implement personalized and adjusted interventions to immigrant women. Therefore, in line with the report about the impact of international migrations, presented to the United Nations Human Rights Council in 2019, we highlight the need to adopt a gender perspective in the analysis and management of international migrations, with migration policies sensitive to the needs of migrant women.

## 6. Conclusions

With this investigation, we aimed to deepen the knowledge on intimate experiences of immigrant Brazilian women in Portugal. Therefore, by analysing the paths of immigrant women, the study's evidence shows that their intimate experiences are marked by episodes of violence, both in Portugal and in Brazil, with 3 out of 10 women having been or are victims of intimate violence. It was also concluded that the most exercised typologies against the study's participants, both in the past and in the present, are psychological violence and verbal violence, which is practiced, in all cases, by the intimate partner. This study also demonstrated that violence is practiced in women in a higher age group. In addition, the data obtained show that most participants, when experiencing episodes of violence, do not seek for help and do not make formal complaints, which reflects the need for the adaptation of health services to this population.

The present investigation contributed to a better understanding and perception about the intimate experiences of immigrant Brazilian women, characterizing possible situations of violence, vulnerability, and difficulties felt by them during the integration and adaptation process in our country. This characterization of the immigrant women's experiences can be used as a tool to prevent stigmas, but also may be important for the analysis and reflection on gender roles in the migration phenomenon, since, despite the prevalence of women in migration flows, studies continue without deepening the gender perspective and the violence issues in this phenomenon. Thus, the contribution of this study in obtaining a deeper knowledge about the intimate violence experiences in the migration phenomenon, could lead to the elaboration and implementation of specific programmes and policies for this population, namely, at the level of health services, therefore supporting immigrant women victims of violence.

Some limitations for the present study must be acknowledged, which may provide new clues and open new ways to be deepened in future investigations. The first limitation of the study is the centralization of the participants in the north of the country, regarding their residential area in Portugal. The second limitation concerning the study's sample is related to the homogeneity regarding the participants' educational qualifications, showing, in most cases, high levels of educational qualifications. Therefore, these two points limited the sample's diversity, making us wonder if the immigrant Brazilian women's experiences with lower levels of educational qualifications and living in other parts of the country could have led us to a different understanding of the phenomenon. Another limitation is related to the perpetrator's

nationality, given that it wasn't obtained in this investigation, and that would be a crucial clue to consider for future studies.

Despite the low number of current victims in this study, it is important to highlight that this study's time period of data collection occurred during the pandemic, coinciding with the lockdown and isolation measures imposed. Which, to a certain extent, could have contributed to concealing other victimization situations, and could have prevented current victims from asking for help. The effects of the current pandemic outbreak in migrations were immediate and drastic and its impact accentuated certain gender inequalities with the reproduction of old asymmetries (European Commission, 2020). Therefore, a more integrated analysis that enables to understand the effects of the pandemic on victims and that takes into account the post-lockdown period is crucial for the identification of prevention policies in medium and long term.

Despite its exploratory character, the present study is relevant to gender and migration studies and assumes an innovative character by focusing on the victimization experiences in the intimate relationships of immigrant women, allowing us to respond to some gaps in the literature. We considered several factors described in the literature, which intend to illustrate the co-occurrence of multiples difficulties during the migratory process (Annoni, 2020). In fact, processes, such as difficulties in the regularization process, in the access to the market labour, and the discrimination felt, place these women in situations of repeated victimization (Sabri et al., 2020), increasing the risk for victims of intimate violence. As concluded in several studies (e.g., Raj & Silverman, 2002), an association between being exposed to experiences of discrimination based on migration status and being subjected to intimate partner violence has been identified, suggesting that a broader approach to prevent and combat intimate partner violence against migrant women must be considered. In this sense, gender violence in intimate partner relationships act not as a mutually exclusive unit but whose reciprocal interaction (e.g., gender, nationality) produces complex social inequalities (Colin, 2017). Therefore, we hope that through the understanding and reflection upon of these women's experiences within the scope of their migratory processes, appropriate, effective, and inclusive programs and policies may be designed and implemented (Collins & Bilge, 2016).

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