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RESEARCH ARTICLE

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## CONTEXT OF VIOLENCE EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN ASSISTED BY OPERATION RONDA MARIA DA PENHA OF THE MILITARY POLICE

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### ABSTRACT

**Introduction:** Domestic and family violence against women is a cultural phenomenon, old and recurring. **Objective:** To describe the context of violence suffered by women in protective measures accompanied by a service to protect women. **Method:** A descriptive, quantitative study, carried out using data obtained from reception questionnaires applied to women victims of domestic violence. **Results:** The women had an average age of 34.1 years, with one to three children, single, low education, non-white, Catholic, without fixed income, with different occupations, and worked but also received some assistance from the government. They ended the protective follow-up because they felt safe with respect to the aggressor, most of whom were male, with an average relationship time of ten years. They used alcohol and / or other drugs even before the assaults occurred, and were not primarily responsible for supporting the family. **Conclusion:** The context of vulnerability to which women are exposed favors the occurrence of several types of violence aimed at them and their children. Therefore, the women's protection service serves as an inspection tool for complying with protective measures, guaranteeing the safety and well-being of these women.

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## INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of the country there have been diverse struggles to end violence against women (VAW), particularly in the last 20 years. However, in spite of having the perspective of happening in different scenarios, this violence occurs most frequently in the domestic environment, based on the relations of male power (Oliveira, 2018; Krug, 2002; Zancan, 2018). Domestic violence against women refers to all the forms of violence and dominant behaviors practiced within the scope of the domestic and family circle. This may be characterized in different ways, ranging from visible bodily marks (physical and sexual) through to the more subtle forms that lead to significant damage to the emotional structure of

women (psychological). Violence occurs irrespective of social status, educational level or ethnicity (Zancan, 2018). Victimization of women in the domestic/conjugal space has been one of the greatest targets of the movement for the protection of women, bringing into the public sphere a subject, which up to now, has been seen as a private matter. The mark of this visibility was made with implementation of Law No. 11340, of August 07, 2006<sup>(4)</sup>, popularly known as the Law of Maria da Pena (LMP). This legislation has leveraged the policies of confronting domestic and family violence and has made it possible to reduce the impunity of aggressors (Oliveira, 2014 and Brazil, 2006). By the LMP, every case of domestic violence against women is considered a crime and makes it possible for aggressors to be arrested in the act or

have them arrested preventively when they threaten the physical integrity of women, so that they have to stay away from the family environment<sup>(4)</sup>. Nevertheless, although this same law is being recognized by the United Nations Organization (UNO) as one of the best contemporary legislations in the combat against domestic violence, the rates of domestic violence against women continue to be alarming (Waiselfisz, 2015). According to the Map of Violence of 2015, of the 4,800 cases of homicides against women in Brazil, 50% were caused by domestic violence or for reasons linked to gender discrimination, those known as femicide, after Law 13.104 / 2015 was passed in March 2015 (Waiselfisz, 2015 and Brazil, 2015). This law, which included the crime of femicide in the list of heinous crimes and aggression, is linked to domestic and family violence, contempt or discrimination against women (Brazil, 2015). In view of this scenario, the urgent protective measures appeared as another tool for the protection of women, who were able to interrupt the cycle of violence and need more protection by the State. In 2016, 195,038 protective measures were issued by the State Courts of the country, with injunctions compelling a party to do or refrain from certain acts, requiring return of the woman to the marital home, removal of the aggressor from the home and, if necessary, the woman in a situation of violence to be taken to a shelter, among other actions (7). In spite of the judge granting the urgent protective measures, it could be observed that the perpetrator continued to harass the victim. This led to institutions feeling that it was necessary to re-think our intervention strategies to safeguard the integrity of life of these women (8). Furthermore, it is of extreme importance to reinforce the articulation of the Protective Network within the scope of both the State and nationally, to effectuate the multi-disciplinary actions offered to women who are victims of domestic violence.

In view of this scenario, Law No. 13.641, was passed on April 3, 2018 (Brazil, 2006), in which the Maria da Penha Law was changed, and it now typified the crime of non-compliance with urgent protective measures. From this time onwards, it was possible to imprison the aggressor who disobeyed the protective measure, as this conduct was now typified (Brazil, 2008). Based on this, the Bahia Military Police (MP/BA) implemented a patrolling service at state level, based on an initiative of the Military Brigade of Rio Grande do Sul. This was Operation Ronda Maria da Penha (ORMP), created on March 8, 2015 (ORMP, 2018). The purpose of ORMP is to effectuate the injunctions of protective measures, inserted by means of a model of policing in the practices of confronting violence against women, strengthening the Network for Confronting Domestic Violence even further. This operation consists of safeguarding the rights of those victimized, who seek the police and lay charges, by supervising the urgent protective measures by means of special agents, together with the victims and aggressors. In addition the operation refers victims and their families to specialized centers of reference for social, psychological and legal assistance (ORMP, 2015 and Souza, 2016). Therefore, the aim of this study was to get to know the profile of women who are victims of domestic violence assisted by the ORMP of MP/BA, identifying the forms of violence suffered and the profile of the aggressors.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

This was a descriptive study with a quantitative approach, conducted with records of women under protective measures

assisted by the ORMP of PM/BA in Juazeiro-BA. The ORM began in the city of Salvador, BA, where the first headquarters in the State were implemented. With the expansion of this Operation, they city of Juazeiro-BA was the first city in the interior of the state to be contemplated for this specialized service. A total of 310 record charts with records of women who were victims of domestic violence were analyzed, by means of the Reception Questionnaire (RQ), applied at the time of the first visit to the home made by the military police members of the ORMP. This questionnaire contained information about the type of violence suffered, the context and the profile of the aggressor. The RQs of women inserted within the criteria of follow-up by the ORMP were included. The exclusion criteria involved record charts with incomplete data making it impossible to survey the pre-established information. Data was collected from February to April 2018 and surveyed the records from November 2015 to December 2017. A structured form was elaborated based on the information contained in the RQ of the ORMP, so that no important information would be lost, or would prevent the aim of the study from being achieved. In the form, the following items information with reference to the victim were contemplated: number of children; marital status; race/ethnicity; age; religion; income; profession/occupation; work. Relative to the aggressor(s) profile(s) and correlated situations: age of the aggressor(s); children with the aggressor(s); degree of proximity to the aggressor(s); main person responsible for supporting the family; time of relationship with the aggressor(s); participation of the victim in some Government benefit. As regards characterization and circumstances of the situations of violence experienced by the victim: type(s) of violence suffered; place(s) where violence occurred; fear of the aggressor; knowledge of victim about LMP; referrals made ad reason for termination of attendance by ORMP. The data were organized in the Microsoft Excel 2013 program and later transported to the Stat Version 14 program. The data collected were analyzed by descriptive statistics by means of distribution of frequency in absolute and relative numbers, measures of central tendency and measures of dispersion such as mean and standard deviation. Confidence intervals of 95% were used for the mean and for proportion, the calculation assumed binomial distribution. The research respected the ethical and legal principles contained in Resolution No.510/16 of the National Health Council and had been appreciated by the Research Ethics Committee of the Federal University of Vale do São Francisco, Report Number 2.437.635.

## RESULTS

The mean age was 34.1 years, of the women, 61.3% were single and 92.9% had children. As regards race, there was predominance of non-white women (78.9%). With reference to place of residence of the victims, only 4.5% of the women lived in the city center and 95.4% of them resided in suburbs at the periphery of the municipality. In general, the suburbs where the women lived were on the outskirts of the municipality. Relative to educational level, 43.2% of the women were observed to have primary schooling, and only 4.5% were illiterate. The majority were of the non-white race/color. As regards religion, 52.6% of those assisted were Catholics; 67.7% of the women were domestic workers or had some other remunerated profession outside of the home, in spite of 72.3% of them reporting they had no fixed income or

did not provide this information; simultaneously, 46.1% of them informed that they did not work (Table 1).

**Table 1. Sociodemographic data of women living under the protective measure. Juazeiro, Bahia. November 2015 to December 2017**

Variables	Mean	SD	CI95% <sup>a</sup>	CI95% <sup>b</sup>
Age	34.1	11.9	32.7	35.4
	N	%		
Marital Status				
Married	70	22.6	18.2	27.6
Divorced/Separated	33	10.7	6.8	16.8
Single	190	61.3	55.7	66.6
Widowed	5	1.6	0.7	3.8
Not related	12	3.9	2.2	6.7
Children (n=310)				
No	22	7.1	4.4	12.5
Yes	288	92.9	89.4	95.3
Educational level				
Illiterate	14	4.5	2.7	7.5
Incomplete/ Complete Primary Schooling	134	43.2	37.8	48.8
High schooling incomplete/complete	128	41.3	35.9	46.9
College Education incomplete/complete	25	8.1	5.5	11.7
Post-graduation incomplete/complete	9	2.9	1.5	5.5
Race/Ethnicity				
White	66	21.3	17.1	26.2
Nonwhite	244	78.7	72.2	85.8
Religion				
Catholic	163	52.6	47.0	58.1
Evangelical	89	28.7	23.9	34.0
Other Religions	51	16.5	12.3	22.9
Without defined religion	7	2.3	1.1	4.7
Woman's Income				
Without fixed income/not informed	224	72.3	63.4	81.8
<=1 minimum wage	70	22.6	18.2	27.6
2 to 5 minimum wages	16	5.1	2.9	10.2
Profession				
Housewife	47	15.2	11.6	19.6
Domestic worker	41	13.2	9.9	17.5
Other professions	169	54.5	48.9	60.0
None/Not informed	53	17.1	11.8	24.5
Works				
No	143	46.1	38.0	55.6
Yes	167	53.9	48.3	59.4

aCI95% - Confidence Interval 95% for mean; bCI95% - Confidence Interval 95% for proportion assuming binomial distribution.

Considering the violence experienced by the woman and the situations correlated with the aggressor, 85.2% of the women who suffered aggressions were observed to be victims of their own present intimate companions; 6.8% suffered aggressions at the hands of ex-companions; 65.6% of the victims had from one to three children with the aggressor; 46.5% of the women assisted had a relationship of over 10 years with the aggressor (Table 2). As regards information about who was the main person responsible for supporting the family, 31.6% were the victims themselves; 60% were other members of the family, or this was not informed; and in only 7.1% of the cases, was the aggressor the main provider of the family. In this same context, 48.7% of those assisted participated in some Federal Government benefit (Table 2). Analysis and characterization of the violence experienced showed that there was predominance of more than one type of violence experienced by the women (71.6%), with 43.6% being violently attacked predominantly at home; and 36.8% both within and outside of the domestic environment. Of the assisted women, 75.5% reported that they feared the aggressor, even before the violence they suffered, whereas only 22.3% of these women mentioned that they knew about the Maria Penha Law (Table

3). When the occurrence of referral of these women under protective measures to some social support or psychological service was verified, 45.5% of them needed to be referred by the Ronda to Partner Organizations. However, 51.6% of these women reported that they did not need to have these referrals made (Table 3).

**Table 2. Profile of aggressor and correlated situations Juazeiro, Bahia. November 2015 to December 2017**

Variables	Mean	SD	CI95%	CI95%
Age	36.6	10.9	35.4	37.8
	N	%		
Has children with the aggressor (n=287)				
None	86	30.0	24.9	35.6
1 to 3 children	188	65.6	52.7	80.5
4 to 9 children	13	4.6	1.7	13.5
Degree of proximity to the aggressor (n=310)				
Companion	264	85.2	80.7	88.7
Ex-companion	21	6.8	4.4	10.2
Other family/other	25	8.1	5.5	11.7
Main person responsible for supporting the family (n=310)				
The woman herself	98	31.6	26.7	37.0
The aggressor	22	7.1	4.7	10.6
Both	4	1.3	0.5	3.4
Others/not informed	186	60.0	52.4	68.6
Participates in some government benefit (n=310)				
Family financial grant/Housing Project	151	48.7	40.7	59.4
Pensioner	4	1.3	0.5	3.4
None	99	31.9	27.0	37.4
Others/not informed	56	18.1	12.6	25.6
Time of relationship with the aggressor (n=310)				
0 to 2 years	63	20.3	16.2	25.2
3 to 5 years	54	17.4	13.6	22.1
6 to 9 years	49	15.8	12.1	20.3
Over 10 years	144	46.5	39.8	54.5

**Table 3. Characterization and circumstances of situations of violence experienced by women and the protective measure. Juazeiro, Bahia. November 2015 to December 2017**

Variables	Mean	SD	CI95%	CI95%
	N	%		
Type of violence suffered				
Physical	6	1.9	0.9	4.3
Psychological	34	11.0	7.9	15.0
Sexual	1	0.3	0.0	2.3
Property (damage?)	47	15.2	11.6	19.6
More than one type of violence	222	71.6	66.3	76.4
Place where violence occurred				
Home	135	43.6	38.1	49.2
Outside the home	9	2.9	1.5	5.5
Within and outside of home	114	36.8	31.6	42.3
Virtual environment	11	3.6	2.0	6.3
Others/not informed	41	13.3	9.5	19.4
Fear of aggressor				
No	36	11.6	8.5	15.7
Yes	234	75.5	70.4	80.0
Not informed	40	12.9	9.6	17.1
Knows about the Maria Penha Law				
No	51	16.5	12.7	21.0
Yes	69	22.3	17.9	27.3
Not informed	190	61.3	55.7	66.6
Referral made				
No	160	51.6	46.0	57.2
Yes	141	45.5	40.0	51.1
Not informed	9	2.9	>1.5%	5.5
Reason for terminating follow-up by the ORMP				
Return to aggressor	33	10.7	7.7	14.6
Feels safe	165	53.2	47.6	58.7
Protective measure filed or removed.	28	9.0	5.6	14.9
Address not localized	30	9.7	6.8	13.5
Maintain follow-up	50	16.1	12.4	20.7
Not informed/others	4	1.3	0.3	5.3

Table 3 also demonstrates that in the category of the reason for terminating follow-up by the Ronda, 53,2% of the women opted for this procedure because they felt they were safe.

## DISCUSSION

The domestic violence scenario has been analyzed in different studies in Brazil and at the international level. Many variables have been discussed with respect to the profile of victims (Borburema, 2017; Castro, 2018; Santos, 2017; Santos, 2017; Bozzo, 2017; Silva, 2018; Falcke, 2017; Leite, 2018; Zavala, 2017 and Fernández, 2018), aggressors and correlated situations (Araújo, 2018; Silva, 2018; Vasconcelos, 2016 and Silva, 2014) and types of violence practiced, together with the characterization and circumstances of these actions (Zart, 2015 and Terra, 2018). When we analyze the profile of women assisted by the researched service, we observed that the results found corroborated those informed by the literature. In general, the suburbs where the women lived were on the outskirts of the municipality. In this context, a study conducted in Minas Gerais with women inserted within the context of domestic violence, also demonstrated that the majority of them informed they resided in suburbs with less infrastructure, leading to a greater trend of social vulnerability (Silva, 2017). In view of this scenario and the importance of the topic, the present study discusses some of these variables with the purpose of giving more visibility to the combat of violent actions against women. When we analyzed the profile of the victims, the results found were in agreement with those described in the literature. The large majority of the suburbs where the women resided were on the outskirts of the city, as only 4.51% of the women lived in placed considered the city center. Another study also pointed out that 52% of the victims informed they resided in suburbs with less structure of basic conditions for living well, leading to a greater trend towards social vulnerability (Silva, 2017).

Considering that the highest prevalence of violence against women occurs as from 30 years of age, a datum found in this and other studies, is associated with the fact that many of them are reluctant to leave the relationship, because they believed that their more advanced age could hinder the resumption of married life with other partners (Santos, 2017; Ferreira, 2016). On the other hand, authors have affirmed that these women, even after the age of 30 years, are apparently young, pretty at a reproductive age, with financial independence and suffer exacerbation of violence exactly at the stage of asking for physical separation from their partners (Zart, 2015). The question of the majority of women in this study of having children may configure as a limiting factor for laying charges has also been seen in another study from the same perspective (Silva, 2017). Moreover, the fact that many of them were single, not officially married to the partner who committed the aggression, was not taken as a protective factor; although they were single, they had an intimate relationship with the aggressive partner. This datum was also demonstrated in a study conducted by the - Inter-Union Department of Statistics and Socio-Economic Studies about women in situations of violence. Whereas, another study showed that being officially married was a protective factor against violence for the studied women (Falcke, 2018). The low educational level of the women could influence their chances of being victimized by the intimate partners. In this study, the prevalence of women with a low level of schooling made them more susceptible to acts of violence, in agreement with the findings of other

studies with women victimized by their intimate partners in which 91.4% were literate (Ferreira, 2018), 63.2% of the women attacked had incomplete or complete primary schooling and 52 women (5.8%) attained higher education (Acosta, 2018); In another study, the majority of the women had completed high school education (63%), incomplete high school (28%), complete primary school (3%), incomplete primary school (1%), complete college education (1%) and complete?? (1%) with (3%) being illiterate (Almeida, 2014).

These findings were in disagreement with those found in the literature, which affirms that the higher the woman's educational level, the lower the chance of suffering violence (Falcke, 2018). We emphasize that a higher educational level offers the perspective of breaking the cycle of maltreatment, because a woman with more knowledge feels more empowered to resolve her conflicts, with greater emotional and financial independence and a higher level of self-esteem (Leite, 2018; Zavala, 2017; Zart, 2018). However, we point out that domestic violence attains women of all educational levels, so that it is important to point out that there is the possibility of having under-notification of violence in women with a higher educational level, for fear of greater exposure in the face of society (Zart, 2015 and Acosta, 2018). As regards the fact of having predominance of non-white victimized women with some defined religion, we point out that skin color may be a factor influencing the higher level of occurrence of violence in non-white women, as could be shown in the findings of studies conducted in Minas Gerais and Bahia, with women who were victims of violence in the domestic environment (Falcke, 2018 and Silva, 2017).

Whereas, the association of domestic violence with religion brings about the reflection on the religious scenario as a facilitator for women remaining in a situation of violence in the domestic environment and avoiding laying charges (Leitão, 2014 and Rodrigues, 2018; Jarsche, 2008 and Rodrigues, 2018). This is because the Church preaches the superiority of men, the everlasting sacrament being the "will of God" and the "holy family" being the patriarchal model to be followed, which favors an entire lifetime of submission to a violent relationship with their partners (Jarsche, 2018; Rodrigues; 2015). Studies conducted with women in situations of domestic violence have shown evidence that the majority of them either had a fixed income or not, or received up to three minimum wages, as was also found in this research. This peculiarity has the potential to favor vulnerability and the experience of violence, due to the difficulty of paying for access to various services, to professionals and to other information (Santos, 2017; Falcke, 2018; Leite, 2018; Ferreira, 2018). In this context, a study conducted with women in Espírito Santo showed evidence that those who had a family income of lower than (up to R\$ 1.500,00) had three times more chance of suffering sexual violence by their partners, than those who had a higher income. Nevertheless, we point out that many women with higher purchasing power laid far fewer charges, because they felt the need to maintain and preserve their status and not lose their assets (Silva, 2018).

The data of the researched women showed that the majority had a different and informal professions or were domestic workers. Other studies have also shown the same findings in their researches (Ferreira, 2018 and Silva, 2018). Considering that 15.2% of the studies women were housewives, the literature has shown evidence that women who do not have a

specific profession or are only housewives tend to spend more time in the domestic environment. In addition, they are financially dependent on their partners, and this could increase the chances of suffering violent situations even further (Zavala, 2017 and Ferreira, 2018). There are different consequences on the lives of women in situations of domestic violence, and they interfere in the relations of work, social interaction and in their physical and psychological health<sup>(31)</sup>. Combating violence has increasingly gained force as from the time when women became empowered and sought to conquer their space in society, irrespective of the activity in which they were engaged. Although there is still a great deal of space to be conquered, studies have observed that many women have acquired greater independence in diverse aspects of their lives, favoring release from living a life under violent conditions (Oliveira, 2018). Furthermore, considering the aggressor and correlated situations, when we consider that the majority were of the male sex over the age of 35 years, the literature has demonstrated that men were the leading protagonists of domestic aggressions. The major portion of them were adults between the ages of 25 and 44 years who had remunerated work (Santos, 2017; Zavala, 2017; Silva, 2018; Silva, 2014), thus corroborating the findings of this study. Therefore, when we observe that the majority of assisted women had an intimate relationship with their aggressors, in both the status of partner and ex-partner at the time the aggressions were suffered. This demonstrated that these women found themselves within a social context of extreme vulnerability in which, instead of having a family relationship of confidence, protection and affection, they were submitted to abusive, violent relations. This context has also been identified in other researches with an equal approach (Zart, 2018 and Ferreira, 2018).

This context of violence frequently lasts throughout many years, as may be perceived in this research, in which a large portion of the women had an affective relationship with the aggressor for over ten years. This was also perceived in another study about the profile of aggressors, in which 37.2% of the women had an affective relationship that lasted for over 10 years (Vasconcelos, 2016). On the other hand, some women had a relationship for a maximum of two years, a datum similar to that of a study conducted in the State of Rio Grande do Sul, which demonstrated that the shorter the time of the marital relationship, the higher the rates of violence could be. This factor took into consideration that the initial stages of conjugality required greater adjustments in order to reach the idealized model of relationship, particularly for men (Falcke, 2018). Nevertheless, irrespective of the time of relationship with the aggressor, the fact that the woman had children could determine the persistence of many women in remaining in a violent domestic environment, because they thought of protecting their children (Terra, 2015). A study conducted with 195 women who suffered violence at the hands of their partners under the effect of drugs, found that the majority of them had two or more children with the aggressor, corroborating the findings of this study (Silva, 2015). The authors affirmed that many of the victims wished to put an end to the situation of violence, however, they felt tied to the aggressor due to the fact that they placed value on being a family; preserving the image of the father of their children, having financial and emotional difficulty with bringing up, supporting and caring for the children and themselves; they were concerned about a place to live, and even felt the lack of support by their families and the State (Santos, 2018; Souza,

2006). Considering that the majority of assisted women were not financially dependent on the aggressor, a close relationship is known to exist between the violence practiced by the partner and the condition of work and financial difficulties. This led to men developing a sense of impotence, because they were unable to maintain themselves in a comfortable social position, without having an adequate job, which resulted in violence (Silva, 2014). Moreover, with the rise in female empowerment over the years, women have gained improved space, making it possible to have greater opportunities of having a stable income, leading to reduced rates of violence (Zart, 2018). This reality corroborated the findings of an Iranian study that revealed greater participation of women in public spaces, with more awareness of their rights (Rasouljan, 2018). However, many of them still find themselves inserted in a cycle of violence - not due to financial dependence - but because of emotional dependence, concern about bringing up their children, and the lack of family and social support (Souza, 2018).

The Government social programs are instruments that favor maintenance of the quality of life of low income families. Seeing that the majority of victims had no fixed income, the majority of them also formed part of some social program, corroborating the findings of a study with women who suffered violence in the State of Ceara, where 26.9% of them counted on some social financial support. From this perspective, the authors studied the relations between receiving social benefits with the chance of domestic violence occurring. They observed that there could be a close relationship between precarious conditions of life, low income and the receipt of benefits from the government, and the greater chance of experiencing situations of violence (Moreira, 2016). On being inserted in a reality of violent actions in the home, women feel submerged in a context with highly damaging consequences to their interpersonal relationships and health. When many women are found to suffer more than one type of domestic violence, as shown in this study and in findings in the literature, it reaffirms that this phenomenon configures as a serious public health problem that require more than punctual measures to combat and prevent it. An important finding of this study was identifying psychological violence as the type less frequently experienced by the women researched. However, one of the types of violence less frequently identified by the victims is known to be the psychological type. From this perspective, the authors affirmed that this seldom notification of psychological violence seen in many researches is due to the fact that many women have difficulty with identifying this violence, because in the majority of cases, it is subtle, silent and indirect, with humiliation, cursing and threats. These victims end up trivializing its occurrence in their daily lives (Zart, 2015). As regards physical violence, a study conducted with police records of women who were victims of domestic violence and laid criminal charges at the police station, showed evidence that the occurrence of this type of violence was predominant, in disagreement with the findings of this study<sup>(30)</sup>. However, it should be considered that physical violence was less frequently reported, when its occurrence is considered in an isolated manner. It was, however, included within the cases associated with other types of violence and its occurrence was the leading significant finding. On the other hand, some studies found that psychological/moral violence was outstanding, followed by the physical and sexual type (Bozzo, 2017; Leite, 2017; Zavala, 2018; Silva, 2018).

Considering that the place of occurrence of violence against women was the victims' own residence, corroborating the findings of another study (Garcia, 2018), we emphasize that this should be the place of greatest protection and safety of these women. However, the authors pointed out that in many realities, the home configures as the space of female vulnerability, because it is the place that is most isolated from the interference of other persons. For this reason it is the place of choice for violent actions by affective partners (Zavala, 2018), who impose constant fear on their partners, leading to these women being constant hostages of this fear (Terra, 2018). Therefore, when the data that attacked women were afraid of their aggressors, even after they were under the care of the protective measure were observed, it was found that the large majority of them continued being fearful of the aggressor. The literature emphasized that within the context of domestic violence, there is a relationship of submission (victim) and power (aggressor). This led to women developing a sense of inferiority, intimidation and fear, particularly when they had previously experienced some situation of aggression by their partners (Bandeira, 2014). Other authors have also affirmed that the recurrence and diversity of violence are factors that facilitate the development of this constant fear, making it difficult for women to lay charges of aggression, favoring the break in the cycle of violence (Acosta, 2018). While the act of laying a charge configures as one of the main devices for beginning to end this context of violence, few women mentioned that they knew about the Maria Penha Law. The majority of them did not answer, or report that they did not know about the Law.

This could be seen as a limiting factor for women laying charges relative to the violence they suffered and enabling them to feel more empowered because they no longer allowed themselves to experience situations of constant aggressions. Some authors have emphasized that a low educational level of the victims, or even their difficulty with accessing up to date information could contribute to their lack of knowledge with respect to the legal provisions for protection<sup>(30)</sup>. On the other hand, those women who knew about the Law and other legal provisions are more likely to enforce their rights and break the cycle of violence, starting with laying charges against the aggressor. Diverse contexts have shown that the history and behavior of the aggressor's life favor the attacked woman's reluctance to lay charges, precisely because of her fear of what may happen to her and her children after she has laid these charges<sup>(20)</sup>. In this study, many assisted women were observed to report that at the time of the violent actions, their aggressors had ingested alcohol or were users of drugs, and some were answerable for other crimes. Other aggressors always acted violently out of jealousy. Some studies about violence against women have emphasized that jealousy, aggressive temperaments and psychoactive substances were reported to be the main motivators of violence by affective partners. In view of this reality of aggressions in the home, many women and their children experience situations of low self-esteem and depression and develop more aggressive behaviors at home and at school, in addition to greater emotional problems, such as suicidal ideation<sup>(26)</sup>. These situations were also shown in the findings of this study, and along these lines, studies have proved that violence is a public health question that leads to damaging consequences for the entire family and society<sup>(14,20)</sup>. This is because children that witness violence within the family environment have a greater tendency to developing emotional, school and behavioral

problems, in addition to becoming future aggressors<sup>(30)</sup>. Associated with this problem, many families are known to require other follow-ups in addition to police protection, in order to avoid greater sequelae. In the present study, almost half of the records of women under protective measure showed evidence that they needed to be referred for these specialized attendances, together with their children, to enable them to be assisted by a multi-professional team. We point out that at the time of reception, the police of the ORMP were shown to be prepared to undertake active listening and together with the families, observe the need for more specialized support, such as social assistance, psychological and legal services, through the support of Agencies in Partnership with the Network of Attendance and Confrontation of Violence against Women<sup>(10)</sup>. The women assisted by ORMP could at any time express the wish to continue with reception of the Ronda, or not. Therefore, there are diverse reasons for closure of these follow-ups, among which are change of address without informing the police; return to the affective relationship with the aggressor and the fact that they were feeling safe, without fear, and for this reason they no longer required constant protection by the Ronda. The latter reason was the most evident in the findings. This datum demonstrated the importance of follow-up by a police service of the protective measure, which allowed women to feel safer and more empowered, with more confidence to lay charges, greater perspective of definite break in the cycle of violence and the return of these women to a life with dignity and health.

## Conclusion

This study allowed the authors to get to know the context of domestic violence suffered by women assisted by a police protection service. This demonstrated that they were of a mean age of 34 years; had one to three children with the aggressor; low educational level, were non-white, without fixed income; the majority were "housewives" and participated in some government program; they were the main or only providers of support for their family and the majority had no knowledge about the Maria Penha Law. As regards the aggressors, the majority of them were men, with a mean age of 36 years, were intimate partners or ex-partners of the victims, with a time of relationship of over 10 years. Among the types of violence observed, there was predominance of more than one type, with violence against assets and psychological violence in isolation, having lower prevalence. The majority of the aggressions were suffered in the home, frequently in the presence of the children. Many women together with their children required referral for legal, social and psychological attendance. Therefore, this study demonstrated that the occurrence of violence against women perpetrated within the domestic environment, mainly by the intimate partner, could involve different aspects and lead to various consequences, irrespective of being physical, psychological, patrimonial or sexual violence. It is a problem that occurs in all levels of society and becomes common in the day to day life of the couple. The complexity of the questions involved in the dynamics of violence results in inequality of autonomy, positions and rights. For effective combat against domestic violence, continuity is required in the integration of units of protection of women, greater disclosure in the means of communication with the purpose of preventing violence and promoting women's health, so that they feel supported and find competent and integrated multi-professional teams to help

them get out of the cycle of violence. Among the limitations of this study, we record the incomplete and/or illegible filling out of many record charts, and the uniformization of many of the questions raised, which made it rather difficult to collect data. Another limitation would be the presence of questions in the follow-up questionnaires of the women, which could raise information with regard to the devices used for aggression, forms of sexual violence and consequences of violence for the health of women.

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