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Candies in hell: women's experiences of violence in Nicaragua

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to describe the characteristics of domestic violence against women in León, Nicaragua. A survey was carried out among a representative sample of 488 women between the ages of 15–49. The physical aggression sub-scale of the Conflict Tactics Scale was used to identify women suffering abuse. In-depth interviews with formerly battered women were performed and narratives from these interviews were analysed and compared with the survey data. Among ever-married women 52% reported having experienced physical partner abuse at some point in their lives. Median duration of abuse was 5 years. A considerable overlap was found between physical, emotional and sexual violence, with 21% of ever-married women reporting all three kinds of abuse. Thirty-one percent of abused women suffered physical violence during pregnancy. The latency period between the initiation of marriage or cohabitation and violence was short, with over 50% of the battered women reporting that the first act of violence act took place within the first 2 years of marriage. Significant, positive associations were found between partner abuse and problems among children, including

associations were found between partner abuse and problems among children, including physical abuse. Both the survey data and the narrative analysis pointed to extreme jealousy and control as constant features of the abusive relationship. Further, the data indicate that battered women frequently experience feelings of shame, isolation and entrapment which, together with a lack of family and community support, often contribute to women's difficulty in recognizing and disengaging from a violent relationship. These findings are consistent with theoretical conceptualisations of domestic violence developed in other countries, suggesting that, to a large degree, women's experiences of violence transcend specific cultural contexts.



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Keywords

Domestic violence; Women; Abuse; Nicaragua; Qualitative

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