

# GUILTY OR VICTIMS? WOMEN AND THE FORCE OF SOCIAL NORMS IN THEIR CONCEPTUALIZATION OF VIOLENCE<sup>1</sup>

CULPADAS OU VÍTIMAS? MULHERES E A FORÇA DAS NORMAS SOCIAIS NA  
CONCEPTUALIZAÇÃO DE VIOLÊNCIA

¿CULPABLES O VÍCTIMAS? LAS MUJERES Y LA FUERZA DE LAS NORMAS SOCIALES EN LA  
CONCEPTUALIZACIÓN DE LA VIOLENCIA

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**ABSTRACT:** Although there have been numerous advances in combatting gender-based violence against women, the phenomenon continues to grow at an alarming rate. Aiming to contribute to its understanding, this article investigates the conceptualization of violence by a group of Brazilian women who narrate on Facebook episodes of violence they have experienced. By means of *AntConc*, it selects posts in which violence and punishment cooccur and analyzes six of them qualitatively, based on the theoretical models of Cognitive Linguistics, in particular, the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980) and the Multilevel and Contextualized view of Metaphor (Kövecses, 2020). Surprisingly, the narrators justify these events with their own behavior, in a process of self-blaming, anchored in the metaphor VIOLENCE IS PUNISHMENT, in which PUNISHMENT IS A CONSEQUENCE. How to explain this phenomenon? Based on the analysis, this conceptualization emerges from the social FORCES that manipulate women whenever there is transgression of the established symbolic order (Bourdieu, 2012).

**KEYWORDS:** Anti-gender violence. Multilevel metaphor. Frames. Perspectivization. Symbolic order.

**RESUMO:** Apesar dos inúmeros avanços no enfrentamento da violência de gênero contra a mulher, os números indicam que esse fenômeno social mantém crescimento alarmante. Visando contribuir para o seu entendimento, este artigo investiga a conceptualização de violência por um grupo de mulheres brasileiras que narram no Facebook episódios de violência por elas experienciados. Com o auxílio do *AntConc*, seleciona postagens em que violência e punição coocorrem e analisa seis delas qualitativamente com base nos modelos teóricos da Linguística Cognitiva, em particular, da Teoria da Metáfora Conceptual (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980) e da Visão Multiníveis e Contextualizada da Metáfora (Kövecses, 2020). Surpreendentemente, as narradoras justificam esses eventos com seu próprio comportamento, em um processo de auto culpabilização, ancorado na metáfora VIOLÊNCIA

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É PUNIÇÃO, em que PUNIÇÃO É CONSEQUÊNCIA. Como explicar esse fenômeno? Com base na análise, essa conceptualização emerge das FORÇAS sociais que manipulam a mulher sempre que há transgressão da ordem simbólica estabelecida (Bourdieu, 2012).

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Violência de gênero. Metáfora multinível. *Frames*. Perspectivação. Ordem simbólica.

RESUMEN: A pesar de los numerosos avances en la lucha contra la violencia de género contra las mujeres, las cifras indican que este fenómeno social sigue creciendo a un ritmo alarmante. Con el objetivo de contribuir a su comprensión, este artículo investiga la conceptualización de la violencia por un grupo de mujeres brasileñas que narran en Facebook episodios de violencia vividos por ellas. Con la ayuda de *AntConc*, selecciona publicaciones en las que coexisten violencia y castigo y analiza cualitativamente seis de ellas, a partir de modelos teóricos de la Lingüística Cognitiva, en particular, la Teoría de la Metáfora Conceptual (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980) y la Visión Multinivel y contextualizada de Metáfora (Kövecses, 2020). Sorprendentemente, las narradoras justifican estos eventos con su propia conducta, en un proceso de autoculpabilización, anclado en la metáfora LA VIOLENCIA ES CASTIGO, en la que EL CASTIGO ES UNA CONSECUENCIA. ¿Cómo Explicar Este Fenómeno? A partir delo análisis, esta conceptualización emerge de las FUERZAS sociales que manipulan a las mujeres siempre que se transgrede el orden simbólico establecido (Bourdieu, 2012).

PALABRAS CLAVE: Violencia de género. Metáfora multinivel. *Frames*. Perspectiva. Orden simbólico.

## 1 INTRODUCTION

According to the latest bulletin of the Brazilian Security Observatories Network, published on March 6th, 2023, acts of gender-based violence against women, in seven of the Brazilian states monitored by the Network, accumulate year after year. As the report for the year 2022 points out, there were 2,443 victims of some type of violence, and 495 cases resulted in feminicides: Every four hours a woman is the victim of some type of violence in the states monitored by the Network. Since these attacks are often committed by partners and ex-partners, these violent behaviors are predictable and can be avoided, highlights the Network's report, if the justice system were committed to taking effective measures to protect women. Among the types of violence computed in the Network's statistics are attempted feminicide and physical aggression, feminicide, homicide, sexual violence and rape, torture, false imprisonment and kidnapping, verbal aggression and threats, trans feminicide, and others. The same woman can suffer several types of violence in one single event. The report also points out that the causes of feminicide include fights, relationship endings, jealousy/supposed betrayal, and other hate crimes.

In São Paulo, a crime occurs every ten hours, and in Rio de Janeiro and Bahia, the highest growth rates were recorded (58% and 45% respectively) in relation to 2021. This growth shows us that confronting gender-based violence against women has proven to be ineffective, and studies that add value to the understanding of this painful and undesirable social phenomenon can illuminate ways to combat it.

With this purpose, this article investigates how violence is conceptualized by women who suffer from it. Based on the linguistic-discursive cues present in their Facebook posts, it gets at the metaphors that cognitively anchor the participant's conceptualization. To this end, it resorts to theoretical models from Cognitive Linguistics, in particular, the Theory of Conceptual Metaphor (Lakoff; Johnson, 1980) and the Multilevel View of Metaphor (Kövecses, 2020). According to these models, "knowledge emerges and is structured from the use of language in real communicative events" (Queiroz, 2020, p. 30), as is the case with Facebook posts. They present linguistic-discursive cues for the conceptual organization of gender violence, from the most concrete levels of experience to the most abstract, which involves ideologies, beliefs, prejudices, and stereotypes that constitute the sociocultural context.

Several events can be characterized as gender-based violence against women. The General Recommendation number 19 of the 1992 United Nations Convention for Gender Equality and Elimination of Discrimination against Women, defines such acts as "violence that is directed against a woman because she is a woman or that affects women disproportionately" (UN CEDAW 1992, online). Article number 1 (chapter 1) of the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women of the Organization of American States (OAS) defines it as "any act or conduct, based on gender, which causes death or physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, whether in the public or the private sphere" (OAS, 1994).

According to these definitions, analyses of the phenomenon require the analyst to differentiate between sex and sexual gender. Bandeira (2014) states that

[...] the qualification and analysis of violence against women emerged as the feminist movement deconstructed the current idea that the sexual apparatus was inherent to the nature of women and men, placing conceptions about the sexes outside the biological scope and inscribing them in history. In turn, it deconstructed the idea that violence against women is linked to meanings attributed, in an essentialized way, to masculinity, femininity, and the relationship between men and women in our [Brazilian] culture. To delve deeper into the topic, the notion of gender – distinct from sex – was fundamental. In its light, the association of the feminine with fragility or submission was given, and, to this day, it still serves to justify prejudices (Bandeira, 2014, p. 449).<sup>2</sup>

In other words, gender-based violence against women is motivated by social inequalities perpetuated culturally and endorsed by the judiciary. They emerge from asymmetrical power relations between men and women. “Gender”, from this perspective, results from historical-cultural processes, from the naturalization of customs through the action of the group that has exercised power for centuries, a group that is mostly male. To reinforce the argument, Bandeira (2014, p. 455) highlights that gender violence has its roots in

- a. male hegemony and power in relationships between men and women;
- b. female subordination, based on gender hierarchy;
- c. reproduction of male and female imageries and of the roles assigned to both men and women through the social construction of violence;
- d. the widespread and, at the same time, invisible existence of violence in family and social relationships; and in
- e. the presence of dissymmetries in the organization of social norms and rules with regards to men’s and women’s behaviors.

It has been treated as “a social disorder that persists”<sup>3</sup> (Queiroz, 2021, p. 28) even if it is mild or invisible in communication processes since it is structural (Bourdieu, 2012, p. 8) and reproduces schemes of thoughts in force in the symbolic order of the social world (Barreira, 1999). Consequently, despite all the advances in feminist advocacy in the last 30 years for the recognition of gender-based violence against women (Queiroz, 2021; Barsted, 2016; IPEA, 2019) and the legal apparatus that accumulates to overcome historically sexist legislation -- in Brazil, only in the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988 were equal rights for men and women recognized; following this advance are the Technical Norm on Sexual Violence (Ministério da Saúde, 1999); the Maria da Penha Law of 2006, which recognizes acts of domestic and intra-family violence as a crime and provides for punishment; the inclusion of femicide as an intentional homicide in the Penal Code, in 2012, among other legal actions – victims surprisingly still justify acts of violence with their own behavior, in a process of self-blame. How does one explain this phenomenon? Why do Brazilian women blame themselves in the face of episodes of violence? Intelligibilities linked to these issues may emerge from a better understanding of how these women conceptualize violence. An analysis of such conceptualization that considers the sociocultural context and the perspective of those involved, according to a qualitative-interpretive paradigm, can add value to the process as well as to coping with the phenomenon. Potentially, these are intelligibilities that contribute to improving the lives, mental and psychological health of women, as already stated by Rezende and Sacramento (2006, p. 96) and by the Ministry of Health in the series of protocols in the Technical Norm of 1999. This study aims to answer these questions and generate such intelligibilities.

<sup>2</sup>The original reads: “A qualificação e a análise da problemática da violência contra a mulher ocorreram à medida que o movimento feminista desconstruiu a ideia corrente de que o aparato sexual era inerente à natureza das mulheres e dos homens, colocando as concepções acerca dos sexos fora do âmbito biológico e as inscrevendo na história. Por sua vez, desconstruiu a ideia de que a violência contra a mulher está ligada aos significados atribuídos, de modo essencializado, à masculinidade, à feminilidade e à relação entre homens e mulheres em nossa cultura. Para se aprofundar no tema, foi fundamental a noção de gênero – distinta da de sexo –, sob a qual se dava no senso comum, a associação do feminino com fragilidade ou submissão, e que até hoje ainda serve para justificar preconceitos”.

<sup>3</sup> The original reads: “uma desordem social que persiste”.

## 2 THEORETICAL AND METHODOLOGICAL FRAMEWORKS

This study resorts to the interdisciplinarity that is typical of studies in Cognitive Linguistics (Johnson, 2007; Lakoff, 1987; Langacker, 2013; Kövecses, 2020), drawing on concepts such as image schema, matrix domain, frame, perspective, and Multilevel Theory of Conceptual Metaphor as well as on a discursive and critical approach (Muéles; Romano, 2023). Among its premises lies the idea that cognition, sociocultural and historical experience, the self, interaction, and the use of language are interrelated (Ellis; Robinson, 2008).

From the interdisciplinary intersections and our knowledge of human cognition (an eminently sociocultural construct according to Barsalou, 2008), emerge intelligibilities related to the attitudes of those who narrate and what they say, based on linguistic-discursive cues and the enunciator's perspective. In our case, women who post in Facebook groups. Intelligibilities also arise about society and its language practices, especially about the ideologies, beliefs, and other types of cognitive structures that organize the narrators' knowledge, thus allowing us to understand the experience of the participants in a broad and critical way, in its perceptual, physical, historical, social, and emotional dimensions (Johnson, 1987).

This is, therefore, a study that gives voice to those who have had it historically silenced for centuries: women. In this sense, it also constitutes a political and moral action, as it sees the discourse of these women on Facebook as a social practice that emerges, shapes, and is shaped by discursive communities (Wodack, 2002; Fairclough, 2001). If so, by giving them a voice and analyzing their stories, we are potentially acting on society.

### 2.1 DATA

Gathered by Queiroz (2021)<sup>4</sup> for her master's thesis, the data were generated by women in several closed groups on Facebook, the fourth largest social network in Brazil in 2023, with 109 million users (DOURADO, 2024). One of Facebook's specificities is being a medium specially designed for the formation of groups dedicated to specific themes, formed by people united by common experiences and interests. In the case of this research, they are groups of women who describe themselves as feminists and/or LGBTQ+ activists and who claim to have the objective of fostering discussions about social aspects, such as male chauvinism and homophobia.

Made up of 112 posts, the corpus is made up of personal narratives (Linde, 1993), most of which are extensive outbursts, revealing various types of violence perpetrated against the narrators, from their own perspectives. It totals 20,102 words. To gather the posts, Queiroz (2021) used entries such as "TRIGGER", "TRIGGER WARNING" or "TW" as a search tool on Facebook, as she noticed that participants in the groups tended to alert others about the content of the posts or the degree of the commotion they could generate.

Once the posts were gathered, six were the steps taken: (1) manual reading of the corpus aiming to identify possible metaphors, following the Pragglejaz Metaphor Identification Procedure (2007, p.3)<sup>5</sup>; (2) manual reading of the corpus to verify, by consulting the Houaiss Electronic Dictionary (2009), whether there were concrete meanings related to the lexical units of the excerpts that could be considered metaphorical; (3) listing of conceptual metaphors triggered by linguistic-discursive cues, such as VIOLENCE IS DIRT, VIOLENCE IS PUNISHMENT, VIOLENCE IS WAR, VIOLENCE IS HUNTING; (4) checking the number of occurrences of metaphorical expressions related to each conceptual metaphor using the AntConc 3.2.4 software (Anthony, 2012) and the Houaiss Electronic

<sup>4</sup> The posts gathered for this article and their analysis are unpublished.

<sup>5</sup> The MIP steps include to read and understand the general meaning of the text-discourse; define lexical units and their meaning in context and co-text; decide whether there is a more current and more basic meaning (concrete, more precise, older) in contexts different from the one analyzed; if there is, check whether the contextual meaning differs from the basic meaning and whether it could be understood in comparison to it. If yes, identify the lexical unit as metaphorical.

Dictionary (2009). The dictionary helped in the selection of terms to be inserted in the AntConc, based on the meaning of the words represented in the source domains of each metaphor listed in (1) – for example, in the VIOLENCE IS PUNISHMENT metaphor, the meaning of the verb “to punish” was verified in the dictionary. The most concrete lexical entries that emerged from the dictionary definitions were the triggers inserted into the AntConc to check their number of occurrences. In the case of “punishment”, the entries corresponded to punish, correct, castigate, and blame, in all its variations and inflections (Table 1).

According to Queiroz (2021), VIOLENCE IS PUNISHMENT is among the three most RECURRENT METAPHORS, HAVING BEEN PRECEDED BY VIOLENCE IS FORCE AGAINST CONTAINER and VIOLENCE IS DANGER, in that order. In this article, we will analyze excerpts from posts with linguistic-discursive cues that index the conceptualization of violence as punishment. The choice arises from our surprise in realizing that guilt is the link uniting the accounts of several victims.

CONCEPTUAL METAPHOR	SELECTED TERM	TRIGGERS Portuguese/English	FREQUENCY
VIOLENCE IS PUNISHMENT	to punish [punir]	[puni*] puni* [corrig*] correct* [castig*] castig* [culp*] blame*	30

**Table 1:** Morpho triggers entered in *AntConc* – VIOLENCE IS PUNISHMENT

**Source:** the authors

With the analysis, we hope to generate critical awareness about the phenomenon and enable social mechanisms to alleviate it. To this end, the following were the research questions: How do the participating women structure the metaphor VIOLENCE IS PUNISHMENT socio-cognitively? What are its lexical and discursive triggers in the data? How and why do the victims understand themselves as guilty of acts of violence committed against them?

The concepts of categorization, mental spaces, frames, matrix domains, and image schemas, constituents of the Multilevel Vision of Metaphor, guided the qualitative analysis of the data, as well as the communicational and sociocultural context in which the posts originate. This theoretical framework is the topic of section 2.2.

## 2.2 THEORETICAL FOUNDATIONS

Few studies investigate gender-based violence in women's narratives on Social Networks in the light of a critical socio-cognitive-discursive approach. Those who do so investigate violence against women in other contexts and/or from different perspectives, as well as following other methodological steps than those we do here (Carneiro, 2014; Presotto *et al.*, 2018; Muéles; Romano, 2023; Da Costa *et al.*, 2022). Carneiro, for example, analyzes the interaction of six women victims of domestic violence, who together formed a focus group at the Casa de Abrigo de São Luís (MA), an institution linked to the State Coordination of Women in Situations of Domestic and Family Violence of the Court of Justice of the State of Maranhão, Northeast Brazil. Unlike what we do in this article, she resorted to Cameron (2007) to examine the grouping of metaphorical vehicles into families and the identification of systematic metaphors, discursive topics, and the link between them throughout face-to-face discursive interactions, understood as the locus of conceptualization. In Cameron's view, systematic metaphors form a network of linguistic metaphors that are semantically similar to each other, which point to the same theme, present in the immediate context of interaction. As such, they reflect emotions, opinions, and positions and constitute an *ad hoc* conceptualization. By adopting this theoretical-analytical approach, Carneiro reveals that there are systematic metaphors such as VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS WEIGHT, VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS DESTRUCTION, and VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IS COMBAT. Carneiro emphasizes that domestic violence against women is not a Brazilian prerogative. In

the world in general, it may be explained by “prejudice, discrimination, and abuse of power and force by a male aggressor, all of which emerge from a society marked by an extremely sexist culture of women’s submission to men” (Carneiro, 2014, p. 56).<sup>6</sup>

This dynamics between dominated and dominators is also demonstrated from the perspective of Conceptual Metaphor Theory by Presotto *et al.* (2018). The authors investigated the metaphorical projections in the article “*Os Vendilhões*”, written by journalist Eliane Brum. The opinion article problematizes the vote on PEC 181/2015, a constitutional amendment on the right to abortion, legally granted by the Brazilian constitution to women victims of sexual violence and in cases of anencephaly or pregnancy with a risk of death for the mother. In the ballot, eighteen men proposed changing the constitutional text, materializing what Bourdieu (2012) calls symbolic violence, the perpetuation of a rape culture, rooted in practices that tolerate and encourage gender-based violence against women. Presotto *et al.* use Corpus Linguistics and the AntConc program to arrive at metaphorical triggers or words that activate the FEMALE BODIES domain and conceptual metaphors such as DOMINATING THE FEMALE BODY IS VIOLENCE, VOTING FOR PEC 181 /2015 IS VIOLENCE and WOMEN’S RIGHTS IS A FIGHT. These are metaphors that allowed the authors to explain the power game at the macro level of the Brazilian social structure. Based on patriarchy, it is a structure that takes away from women the right to decide about their own bodies and destinies. Ironically, the constitutional PRO-LIFE cultural model, which defends the dignity of human beings, takes it away from women.

The value of the *macho* culture in the construction of women as objects is also highlighted by da Costa *et al.* (2022), in a study that combined Critical Discourse Analysis with the concept of categorization (Lakoff, 1987) – a cognitive mechanism that allows us to organize world knowledge, placing entities perceived as similar in the same group or category. The more recurrent and easier to remember, the more prototypical and naturalized our categories are. In the blog analyzed by the authors (maintained by students of Accounting Sciences at Universidade Nacional de Brasília - UNB), there is a prototype of a ‘Man’ - the male - and a prototype of a ‘woman’ – the weaker sex, who accepts aggression – that is socially constructed stereotypes.

The phenomenon, as already pointed out by Carneiro (2014), goes beyond the Brazilian borders. Muéles and Romano (2023) show how its conceptualization has changed longitudinally (from 2005 to 2022), in posters published on November 25th, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in Spain. The authors adopt a socio-cognitive-discursive and critical approach, like the one embraced here. In the analysis, however, they use different concepts from those recruited by this article, namely, metaphorical multimodal creativity<sup>7</sup>, metaphorical scenario<sup>8</sup> (Mussolf, 2006; 2016), and metaphorical polarization<sup>9</sup> (Peterssen; Soares da Silva, 2023). The analysis shows how the target audience of the posters gradually changes from women (exclusively) to society in general, including men. The change happens in metaphorical scenarios that focus on society’s ACTION in combating gender violence. Social and cognitive frames in which women are conceptualized as active citizens and not submissive victims were activated. Muéles and Romano’s results take us back to Fairclough (2001) and Wodack (2002) and their theorization about the dialectical relationship between discourse, social practices, and action.

Queiroz (2021), in turn, using a methodology like that of the present study, carries out a general survey of conceptual metaphors in posts gathered from the same closed Facebook groups object of this article. She analyzes them in light of the Multilevel Metaphor Theory (Kövecses, 2020) aiming to reflect on the categorization of VIOLENCE and the effects of prototypicality that could justify a possible radial category. For this purpose, her study highlights a prototype or a more central member of the category, namely: VIOLENCE IS FORCE AGAINST CONTAINER, since it is the most frequently used categorization of anti-gender violence. Its attributes

<sup>6</sup> The original reads: “o preconceito, a discriminação e o abuso de poder e força por parte do agressor, [são] decorrentes de uma sociedade marcada por uma cultura extremamente machista de submissão da mulher em relação ao homem”.

<sup>7</sup> Verbal and pictorial metaphors, situated in the sociocultural context and ideologically geared toward social and perceptual transformation regarding gender violence.

<sup>8</sup> The concept explains multimodal metaphors as mini narratives or framing tools that include pragmatic knowledge and a series of inferences by the discursive community about the context, the participants, their roles, consequences and value judgements that would allow interpretations such as “nobody should be abused” (Muéles; Romano, 2023).

<sup>9</sup> Metaphors that represent the endo group (the women’s group, “we”) positively versus metaphors used to represent the exo group (“they”, the aggressors) negatively. While women in the posters take on a feminist identity within an ideological frame of empowered women, capable of facing and overcoming gender violence, the aggressors have their self delegitimized (Muéles; Romano, 2023).

(manipulation by FORCE) spreads to the most peripheral radial (Queiroz, 2021, p. 98). According to Queiroz, FORCE does not appear in the reports only as physical – but also takes the form of psychological torture, threats, ideologies, and laws that dictate women's behaviors. The woman's body and mind, as well as the place she must occupy (the house), are among the spaces represented as CONTAINERS, spaces that serve the interests of the aggressors. From the prototypical center to the more peripheral radials are other metaphors such as VIOLENCE IS DANGER, PUNISHMENT, DIRT, CONTAINER INVASION, HUNTING, ILLNESS, WAR, HORROR FILM, PRISON, BLINDNESS, in that order. The effects of prototypicality explain the degree of representativeness of each member of the VIOLENCE category as well as the kinship among themselves, as they maintain some commonality as well as differences with each other.

Differing from Queiroz (2021), Caldeira *et al.* (2020) focus on a single metaphor – VIOLENCE IS HUNTING. In the discursive context, this metaphor activates the understanding that the man is the hunter, the one who uses strategies to subjugate his prey – the woman. She, in turn, to not be mistreated, dominated, or killed, needs to escape, run, and hide from the hunter. In other words, the metaphor constructs women as the HUNT, a meaning that reproduces the dynamics between dominated and dominators (Carneiro, 2014; Presotto *et al.*, 2018; Da Costa, 2022) and aligns with sociocultural practices such as *machismo* and the patriarchal structure that governs women's upbringing and their family structure, both socially and legally, despite so many changes to the law.

Alvaro (2017) distances herself from the discursive approach and undertakes a semantic-cognitive analysis of interviews published in the book “*Espelho de Vênus*”<sup>10</sup>, carried out with women of different ages, classes, and social occupations. Alvaro's analysis resorts to the concepts of self and perspective in Cognitive Linguistics (Lakoff, 1987; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999; Langacker, 1987) to underline the episodes of gender violence present in the interviewees' statements, even if they themselves did not perceive them as so. To explain the phenomenon, the author embraces the general metaphorical *subject-self* scheme theory (Lakoff; Johnson, 1999), which advances that reason, will, and the ability to judge and feel are in the consciousness of the subject, while all human actions, the body, social roles, experiences are part of the self. Actually, it is a scheme that instantiates the metaphor of manipulation and control of objects and explains why we associate control of our body with control of an object, even if this happens unconsciously. In the data, Alvaro (2017) finds several manifestations of this general metaphorical scheme. In one of the interviews, the participant uses verbal forms such as “take back” [*entregar de volta*] and “return” [“devolver”], to refer to her own self as if she were a commodity: “Why didn't he take me back?” The scheme highlights the blaming and objectification of women, from their own point of view; it is a personal and subjective perception of the facts, constructed in their own discursive representation, paradoxical though it may seem. Our data seems to point in the same direction, replicating Alvaro (2017), Queiroz (2021), and da Costa *et al.* (2022).

Contrasting with the present research, the studies reviewed cover different types of anti-gender violence against women (Queiroz, 2021); focus on a specific metaphor other than the one discussed here (Caldeira *et al.*, 2020); analyze an opinion text published in the media (Presotto *et al.*, 2018) about the laws and the right to abortion for sexually violated women or have as their corpus posters published in the Spanish media over 20 years (Muéles; Romano, 2023). Similarly, Alvaro, Queiroz, and Caldeira *et al.* adopt procedures from Corpus Linguistics, by using AntConc to find excerpts that exemplify conceptual metaphors already located manually. However, none of the previous studies looked at the VIOLENCE IS PUNISHMENT metaphor in Facebook posts according to a socio-cognitive-discursive and critical approach that combined the Multilevel View of Metaphor (Kövecses, 2020) and AntConc as a methodological tool.

### 2.3 UNITS OF ANALYSIS

In their theory, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) propose that human thought is fundamentally metaphorical, a characteristic that enables human beings to understand one concept in terms of another. In their view, it is a talent that is activated whenever human beings are faced with abstract concepts such as VIOLENCE. For example, in the conceptual metaphor VIOLENCE IS PUNISHMENT, there are two conceptual domains: a more concrete one, PUNISHMENT, and a more abstract one, VIOLENCE. When we think metaphorically, we map the attributes of the more concrete domain (the source domain) onto the more abstract domain (the target domain) to be able to understand it. Or else, VIOLENCE is understood according to the attributes of PUNISHMENT.

<sup>10</sup> Authored by Branca Moreira Alves and published in 1981, by Brasiliense, the book explores women's social and sexual identities in the interviews.

Such a process of meaning construction, according to the assumptions of Cognitive Linguistics, is embodied (Lakoff, 1987) or rooted in sensorimotor experiences derived from physical actions and sensations that we experience with our body: being punished, disciplined, corrected, castigated for actions that go against established sociocultural norms. This is to say that the source domain of the metaphor in question includes the participants' experiences with punishment throughout their lives. On the other hand, VIOLENCE, the target domain, as it is a more abstract category, encompasses both physical and psychological aspects arising from punishment, for example, self-blame. Both domains are found in our long-term memory and are activated by linguistic-discursive cues.

However, Kövecses (2017) argues that it is necessary to go beyond projections between domains and identify which aspects are profiled in the process of meaning making mediated by conceptual metaphors. To do so, he proposes the Multilevel View of Metaphor (Kövecses, 2017), which advocates that metaphors are organized into hierarchical cognitive levels, with varying degrees of schematicity (Kövecses, 2017, p. 322) and simultaneously. These levels are: (first) sub-individual, the level of image schemes; (second and third) supra-individual, the levels related to domains and frames; and (fourth) individual, the level of mental spaces.

Image schemas illuminate the role of the body and of experience in meaning making. Formalized by Johnson (2007, p. 141)<sup>11</sup>, the concept explains how we understand abstract and spatial concepts. For the author, image schemas such as MOVEMENT, TRAJECTORY, CONTAINER, AND FORCE emerge from physical and emotional experiences in and with the world, which are repeated daily. To structure more abstract categories, we trigger these experiences. In the case of VIOLENCE, the schemas of MOVEMENT and TRAJECTORY, as well as FORCE against CONTAINER structure meaning construction. In discourse, the woman's body and mind emerge as CONTAINERS that suffer the actions of antagonistic forces that punish them physically and/or psychologically. The agent of such a FORCE is the man and/or the sociocultural norms that restrain women's MOVEMENT in a delimited SPACE, as we will illustrate in the analysis.

The second and third levels (domains and frames), unlike image schemas and their schematic relations, have a much more specific propositional and schematic nature. In the hierarchy proposed by the author, they occupy the second and third levels because they provide a series of details not elaborated on at the first level.

Domains are a set of cognitive representations or a variety of concepts that characterize distinct aspects of a representational space (Langacker, 1987): "domains are necessarily cognitive entities: mental experiences, representational spaces, concepts, or conceptual complexes" (p.147). Radden and Dirven (2007, p. 11) detail Langacker's proposal by referring to "general fields of conceptualization in which a category fits into a given situation. For example, a knife belongs to the domain of 'eating' if it is used to cut bread at breakfast time, but to the domain of 'aggression' if it is used as a weapon." Such fields can be exemplified as EMOTION, SPORTS, TRAVEL or include complex concepts such as EVENT (Langacker, p.147).

Frames are even more specific (Kövecses, 2017) than domains because they elaborate on domains even further. In Fillmore's words, frames are "[...] any system of concepts related in such a way that to understand any one of them you have to understand the whole structure in which it fits; when one of the things in such structure is introduced into a text, or into a conversation, all of the others are automatically made available" (Fillmore, 1982, p.111).

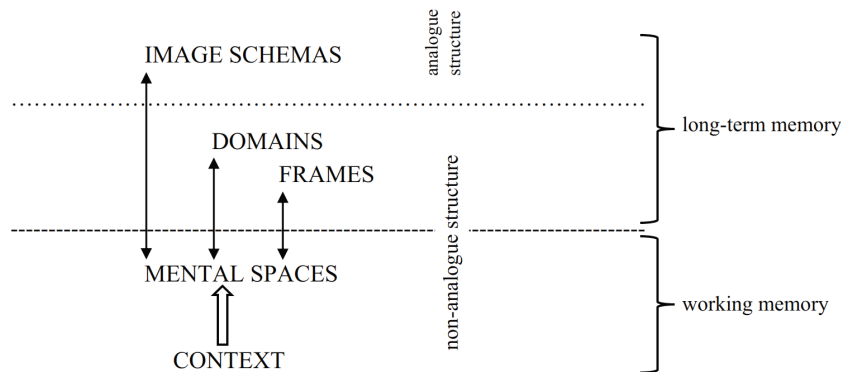
For Fillmore (1982), "[...] a frame, as the notion plays a role in the description of linguistic meanings, is a system of categories structured in accordance with some motivating context" (p.119). The supra-individual levels of domains and frames structure sociocultural metaphorical patterns. At the same time, they are based on image schemas.

Whenever relationships between frames are filled by specific values, in communicative situations, we are dealing with mental spaces (Kövecses, 2020), structures of the fourth hierarchical, individual level. They are "very partial" cognitive structures built when we think and talk, for the purposes of local understanding and action. They contain elements and are structured by frames and cognitive models" (Kövecses, 2017, p. 326) and are activated online, carrying with them all the experience and sociocultural aspects that

<sup>11</sup> "Image-schematic structure is the basis for our understanding of spatial terms and all aspects of our perception and motor activities."



constitute the context. According to Kövecses (2020), context was a missing component in the Theory of Conceptual Metaphor; only by taking it into consideration, analysts can do justice to the ideological and sociocultural marks that characterize the motivating origins of metaphors and meaning construction. If meaning depends directly on context, considering the discursive situation in which a narrator conceptualizes a given metaphor is the way to unravel it and find its sociocultural roots. Therefore, Kövecses (2020, p. 105) inscribes context in the hierarchical levels of schematicity, indicating that it occurs at the level of working memory or mental spaces. To this end, he aligns with Langacker (2008) and defines them as “everything that is presumed to be shared by the speaker and the listener as the basis of discourse at a given moment” (KÖVECSES, 2020, p. 94). These multilevels of schematicity and the influence of context are diagrammed by the author as shown in Figure 1.



**Figure 1:** Multilevel structure of metaphors

**Source:** Kövecses (2020, p. 105)

This is to say that it encompasses the cognitive-conceptual context, the properties of the discursive situation, linguistic cues, and the bodies of the interlocutors, forming a communicational scenario. In this study, the situational context involves women victims of gender-based violence in a sexist and patriarchal society. Specifically, they are women who participate in Facebook groups that address anti-gender violence. The discursive context involves the properties of communication in digital media and on the Facebook platform, as well as the sharing of personal narratives about episodes of violence suffered by the participants. The cognitive-conceptual context encompasses the ideologies, interests, and concerns that inhabit the narrators' conceptual system, mainly the mobilization of virtual groups in favor of the feminist struggle for equal rights between genders, the interest in forming a support network, and the fear of suffering new episodes of violence. Finally, the bodily context consists of the physical characteristics of those involved and how they influence the production and understanding of metaphors. For example, the narrators in this study experienced situations in which their bodies were perceived as feminine, women's bodies, fragile bodies, therefore ready to be invaded, as observed by Queiroz (2021) in the metaphor VIOLENCE IS FORCE AGAINST CONTAINER. It is to these multilevels of schemes that we resort to analyzing the data and theorizing about the conceptualization of violence.

### 3 VIOLENCE IS PUNISHMENT

Punishment mechanisms that penalize those who deviate from the behaviors expected by society permeate the history of the world. Varying in the degree of cruelty, “they stigmatize and despise the humanity of the condemned person”<sup>12</sup> (Machado, 2009, p. 8). Even critical criminology within the scope of law, according to Machado, considers misconduct to be a political and socio-historical creation in response to how society reacts to certain behaviors, aiming to maintain power relations that emerge from the social order. In the religious sphere, thousands of women, seen as witches, were condemned to death at the stake as an instrument of repression for their supposed alliance with the devil. For more than three hundred years (1450-1750), well into the Modern Age, brutal punishments and torture forced self-confessions of guilt from these women. The longer it took them to confess, the greater the inquisitors' certainty that there were demonic forces behind such resistance to mistreatment. Unfortunately, these self-confessions of

<sup>12</sup> The original reads: “estigmatizam e desprezam a humanidade do condenado”.

guilt or the feeling that one has colluded with “evil” and, therefore, deserves some form of punishment do not appear only in history. The reports generated by AntConc attest to the fact:

1. One night, we returned from a party. I was very very drunk, he wasn't. He wanted sex, **I provoked it**. At this point, all I wanted was to sleep... And well, he still wanted sex [...] And I also don't need to say that, despite feeling like crap that night and after it, **I was fully aware that it was my fault** (I was drunk, **I had provoked it**, we were together, **if I had said 'no'** anyone from my student hall would have helped me, but I didn't). Well, **the blame was inevitable**.
2. When I was 12 years old, my mother's later boyfriend, drunk at a wedding party slapped me on the butt and said "how hot you look". **I felt like crap**. I was wearing a dress and **I thought it was my fault**.
3. [...] However, I chose not to say anything to the family, after all, **it was my fault** first for asking him to help me with something [...] But, what am I going to do? I believe that in his mind I gave him a break when I asked him to change the shower for me, while I was alone at home, anyways **it was my fault** for trusting someone who has been in our family for years.
4. [...] But this person didn't actually rape me, but he kept rubbing himself [...] I didn't understand, I thought I had lost my virginity [...] But to my surprise, I was a virgin. **I blame myself to this day** for having lost it too young... [...] **If I hadn't lost my virginity early**, I probably wouldn't have been beaten by the man who took it...
5. I was harassed by the uncle of a childhood friend, he would grope to feel me up and so on, I didn't know how to react, **I didn't know what to do, much less feel**, I just know that **I feel like a bad, horrible person for not having done something**.
6. When I was a child, I used to play with the son of my aunt's neighbor, and his father took me aside, and started touching me! When I got older and understood what had happened, **I started to feel like crap**, and **think it was my fault**, because why would anyone do that?

At the discourse level, the expressions marked in bold are linguistic-discursive indices that profile attributes of THE PUNISHMENT domain, a broad domain, composed of several elements, such as the offender, the penalty, the wrongful conduct, judgments, causal relationships, emotions, etc. They also cover, at the first hierarchical level, image schemas and schematic relationships such as a TRAJECTORY of errors or pacts with 'evil' in the light of a sociocultural context that leads women to see as the RESTRICTION of their movements, CONTAINED by a greater FORCE (violence), as natural. According to their own desire for self-confession, this FORCE ends up RESTRICTING their EXISTENCE. These schemas as well as the schematic relationships derived from them are summarized in Table 2.

IMAGE SCHEMAS	SCHEMATIC RELATIONS
SPACE	CLOSE-DISTANT / CONTACT
SCALE	TRAJECTORY
CONTAINER	CONTAINMENT
FORCE	BALANCE, RESTRICTION, BLOCKAGE
EXISTENCE	REMOVAL, DELIMITED SPACE

Table 2: PUNISHMENT image schemas

Source: the authors

The PUNISHMENT domain is also structured by frames such as the WRONGFUL CONDUCT frame, which characterizes these women's actions as inappropriate and motivates self-confession: being "very very drunk", not having said no, being in a dress, having lost virginity early, not knowing how to react, asking a family member to change the shower while alone at home, "having trusted someone who is in our family" or even not understanding why someone would commit harassment while playing with the neighbor's child. There is also the PENALTY frame against these 'undue' behaviors. Discursively, it is constructed as the act of violence committed against them. In addition, there is the SOCIAL NORMS frame, which encompasses the socio-historically established patterns of behavior for women, such as not receiving men if alone at home, wearing clothes that do not 'provoke', as if men were not responsible for their own actions, but women instead.

Socioculturally, no matter how much we have advanced in the field of equal rights between genders, the narrators still conceptualize their actions as wrongful and subject to punishment. Given the strength of current social norms, only in May 2023 femicide in self-defense of honor ceased to be legally supported in Brazil. In the case of the narratives above, negligence ("if I had said no"; "if I hadn't let him in") or lack of care in social and sexual relations with a man and actions condoning 'evil' (wearing a dress), emerge as CAUSES of the violent actions suffered by the narrators, from their perspectives. At the same time, these frames also point to roles, specific values at the level of mental spaces, as well as mappings between the PUNISHMENT source domain and the VIOLENCE target domain, motivated by CAUSE-CONSEQUENCE relationships, in such a way that certain aspects of the source PUNISHMENT contribute productively to the meaning of the target domain VIOLENCE. In the discourse of these women, the transgression of the established social order is the CAUSE of violence, here conceptualized as a series of physical (rape; harassment) and psychological (shame, regret, fear) CONSEQUENCES, which culminate in their own self-confession of guilt ("it was my fault"). The profiled foci of meaning can be summarized in the following mapping:

- (1) Justice/Social norms restrict wrongful conduct // The offender restricts the woman's SPACE for action and her freedom;
- (2) Acts of negligence or omission on the part of the woman // culpable actions – crimes;
- (3) Punishment for acts that violate the social order // physical and psychological violence;
- (4) Cause or origin of violence // women's actions;
- (5) Consequences of the woman's conduct // Punishment;
- (6) Punishment // violence;
- (7) Violence // sexual harassment or abuse.

The PUNISHMENT domain evokes the frame OF WRONGFUL CONDUCT and guilt as an attribution of the role women performed by acting carelessly or thoughtlessly. Therefore, women recognize their breach of conduct. In their view, their careless actions led men to force their bodies against female bodies. In the frame, women take on the role of offenders and assign the role of victims to men. The PUNISHMENT domain also triggers other frames such as REGRET, SHAME, and JUSTICE. In the JUSTICE frame, men/society punish women, positioning them as offenders and making them feel ashamed, aiming to reestablish the socioculturally established order. In the REPENTANCE frame, women, manipulated by the social order and mainly by men, are compelled to feel sorry and to position themselves as guilty, when in reality, there is an inversion of responsibilities and values, as the victims take the place of the offenders and the offenders of the victims. In the frame of DIRT, women feel like "trash", and "ashamed", for having, from their own perspective, omitted or allowed the abuse or harassment to occur. All these feelings inhabit the domain of EMOTIONS, triggered by the verb "feel" in the various excerpts from the corpus, including those selected for this article ("**I feel like a bad, horrible person**"; "**I started to feel like rubbish**"). In all excerpts, psychological torture is structured by the frames WRONGFUL CONDUCT, SHAME, FILTH, REGRET. The function of GUILT seems to be to allow reflection on the PURPOSE of VIOLENCE, such as men's control of women and the perpetuation of socially constituted power relations. Ultimately, any attribution of guilt to those who actually engage in culpable conduct (men and the established social order) is erased.

The roles and relationships constituted at supra-individual levels and in the relationships between frames take us to the fourth hierarchical level, mental spaces, which we discuss by looking at each excerpt. In (1), the victim of violence uses the indicative mood

to discursively position herself as the offender and responsible for the rape (“**I provoked it**”; “**I was aware that it was my fault**”) or even to theorize that “**if I had said 'no'**, nothing would have happened”. These are cues that open the mental space GUILT and contribute to the understanding of VIOLENCE as a CONSEQUENCE or PUNISHMENT.

In excerpt (2), the narrator recalls an episode from her adolescence in which her mother's boyfriend harassed her and her feelings afterward : I felt like “trash”. She states that “I was wearing a dress” to construct her perspective of the facts. What is left unsaid is “if I hadn't been wearing a dress, nothing would have happened”. The conjunction “and” functions as the link between the CAUSE and the CONSEQUENCE, opening the mental space of GUILT.

In excerpt (3), the narrator also uses the indicative mood to show her certainty about her misconduct. She repeats “it was my fault” to justify the sexual abuse, as if asking for help from someone who has been in the family for years was a sin. The explanatory sentence beginning with “because” opens the mental space of GUILT, which in previous parts of the narration would be built by expressions such as “I allowed it, I believe that this was my mistake, but I would never have imagined it... because he already he had helped me with some things like changing the shower.” In this and the previous excerpts, psychological torture is discursively represented by feelings of fear, because, as the victim says in subsequent discourse, “I spent about 15 days sleeping with my mother, day or night any male voice that called at the gate, I would freeze in fear that it was him.”

The script replays in excerpt (4), a narrative that justifies physical violence with the early loss of virginity, seen by the victim as having been provoked by herself and her lack of knowledge about sex (“**If I hadn't lost my virginity early**, I probably wouldn't get beaten by the man who took it [...]). The conditional sentence opens the mental space of GUILT. Again, the victim puts herself in the role of the offender. Her punishment is being beaten by the man who abused her. Excerpts (5) and (6) are no different. The women, harassed, blame themselves for not knowing how to react.

The conceptualization of VIOLENCE is constructed by the relationship between frames activated in the PUNISHMENT domain from the perspective of the narrators. These are frames that expose a reversal of roles since those who commit violence are not tormented by guilt nor do they feel “ashamed” or even “repentant”. The expressions “he kept rubbing himself” and “he touched me” reveal that the PUNISHMENT domain, structured schematically by the notions of SPACE, RESTRICTION, CONTAINER, and EXISTENCE, acts on women in a way opposite to that experienced by the real aggressors. They instantiate causal relationships that make VIOLENCE the CONSEQUENCE and the women's behaviors the CAUSES. This behavioral pattern is still far from being abolished and leads women to see themselves as offenders, taking on a role that belongs to men and/or society. We summarize these relationships in Table 3.

PUNISHMENT	VIOLENCE
IMAGE SCHEMAS SPACE SCALE CONTAINER EXISTENCE FORCE BALANCE	VIOLENCE
MATRIX DOMAIN Wrongful conduct Penalty Judgment Emotions Offender Victim	Control of the woman's body and mind
FRAMES	VIOLENCE EVENTS

<p>JUSTICE</p> <p>SOCIAL NORMS</p> <p>WRONGFUL CONDUCT</p> <p>REGRET</p> <p>DIRT</p> <p>SHAME</p> <p>CAUSAL RELATIONS</p>	<p>HARASSMENT , RAPE</p> <p>JUSTICE</p> <p>SOCIETY / OFFENDER MANIPULATE AND PUNISH WOMEN</p> <p>PENALTY</p> <p>PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSICAL TORTURE</p>
<p>MENTAL SPACES</p> <p><i>Excerpt 1:</i> “<b>I was drunk, I provoked it</b>, we were together [...]”</p> <p><i>Excerpt 2:</i> “[...]my mother’s later boyfriend, drunk at a wedding party slapped me on the butt and said “how hot you look”. [...] I was wearing a dress and <b>I thought it was my fault</b>.”</p> <p><i>Excerpt 3:</i> [...] “in his mind, I gave him a break when I asked him to change the shower for me, while I was alone at home”[...]</p> <p><i>Excerpt 4:</i> [...] “But this person didn’t actually rape me, but he kept rubbing himself [...] I didn’t understand, I thought I had lost my virginity [...]”</p> <p><i>Excerpt 5:</i> [...] “I was harassed by the uncle of a childhood friend, he would grope to feel me up and so on, I didn’t know how to react, <b>I didn’t know what to do much less feel</b>”</p> <p><i>Excerpt 6:</i> [...] “his father took me aside, and started touching me!”</p>	<p><i>Excerpt 1:</i> “<b>I was fully aware that it was my fault</b> [...] <b>if I had said ‘no’</b> anyone from my student hall would have helped me, but I didn’t. Well, <b>the blame was inevitable</b>.”</p> <p><i>Excerpt 2:</i> [...] “<b>I felt like crap</b>”</p> <p><i>Excerpt 3:</i> “[...] after all, <b>it was my fault</b> for asking him to help me with something [...] for trusting someone who has been in our family for years.”</p> <p><i>Excerpt 4:</i> “<b>I blame myself to this day</b> for having lost it too young... [...] <b>If I hadn’t lost my virginity early</b>, I probably wouldn’t have been beaten by the man who took it...”</p> <p><i>Excerpt 5:</i> “I just know that <b>I feel like a bad, horrible person for not having done something</b>”.</p> <p><i>Excerpt 6:</i> [...] “<b>I started to feel like crap</b>, and <b>think it was my fault</b>, because why would anyone do that?</p>

**Table 3:** Conceptual metaphor VIOLENCE IS PUNISHMENT

**Source:** the authors

#### 4 FINAL COMMENTS

In this study, we examined the conceptual metaphor VIOLENCE IS PUNISHMENT produced by women victims of violence in personal narratives extracted from Facebook. The metaphor, in its multiple hierarchical levels (Kövecses, 2020), seems to contribute to the meaning of the VIOLENCE domain, as it signals, via discourse, how the narrators perceive acts of harassment or rape committed against them. The conceptualization of VIOLENCE emerges from relations established between this abstract domain and the source domain PUNISHMENT. By understanding violence as a punishment or penalty, women categorize themselves as offenders or incapable of acting in situations of harassment or rape. They view their behaviors as WRONGFUL CONDUCT, responsible for the men’s actions, in a dangerous reversal of roles that leads to psychologically torture for years on end. Such a perspective allows the perpetuation of asymmetrical power relationships between men and women and of social inequalities between genders (Bourdieu; 2012; Bandeira, 2014). In Bourdieu’s view, the reproduction of this scheme is structural. It emerges from the current social world. The narratives corroborate the author and reproduce the dynamics between dominated and dominators (Carneiro, 2014; Presotto *et al.* 2018; Da Costa *et al.*, 2022).

In their perspective of their conduct as the CAUSE of violence, women do not envisage the FORCE exerted by socioculturally established relationships on their understanding of facts. This STRENGTH comes from ideologies that dictate what women should wear and how they should behave, which inhabit socioculturally constructed stereotypes (Bandeira, 2014; Alvaro, 2017; Da Costa *et al.*, 2022; Machado, 2009). This interpretation stems from the metaphor CAUSES ARE FORCES, which, in turn, is based on the understanding that EVENTS ARE CAUSES (Lakoff; Johnson, 1999). If we consider the prototypical structure of the causation radial category proposed by Lakoff and Johnson (1999), it combines “enabling causation” and “emotional causation”, in which the role of agent, that should belong to men and society, is seen by the narrators as their own. While enabling causation is one that “involves either the absence or forceful removal of an impediment to action” (p.221), emotional causation occurs when “a perception of thought is conceptualized as an external stimulus that forcefully produces an emotion in us” [...]. The authors further state that causation requires the application of FORCE or power to cause change from one state to another. This change can be physical or psychological.

Our analysis of the context leads us to interpret the sociocultural norms imposed on women as the manipulative FORCE, the one that allows women to be controlled as OBJECTS by indirect forces such as the psychological FORCE exerted by the sociocultural context and structural *machismo*. Such FORCE causes changes in their psyche, to the point where they consider themselves guilty of actions they did not commit and conceptualize VIOLENCE as PUNISHMENT.

The effect of this FORCE is negative, and its degree varies from context to context, individually. In the corpus of this article, it seems considerable, given the fear, shame, and degree of self-blame discursively represented. As the concept of causation is highly complex, we understand that the posts contain the minimum elements to interpret the events narrated as belonging to this category. There is manipulation of an OBJECT (the woman), and there are physical and psychological changes resulting from such manipulation; there are agents who assert their POWER (man and patriarchal society).

The excerpts also corroborate the general *subject-self* metaphor schema (Alvaro, 2017; Lakoff; Johnson, 1999). When the CAUSES ARE FORCES metaphor is combined with the general *subject-self* metaphorical scheme, the self, the part of the subject that incorporates social roles, its actions in the world, and history, ends up being conceptualized as an OBJECT. Women conceptualize themselves as passive beings (OBJECTS), incapable of protecting their own bodies (SPACE; CONTAINER).

Guilt, consequently, is the link that connects the narratives in the corpus as well as PUNISHMENT in the face of the established social order transgression. As such, it functions as a form of psychological torture that perpetuates the act of violence committed by men throughout these women's lives, as it attacks the female psyche and causes continued suffering. Often, as in the case of narrator 4, the woman does not even understand the seriousness of the harassment. The fact is that, induced by the social norms, they are led to believe that they suffer because they deserve it. Hidden ideologies cloud their ability to discern properly. In this sense, we once again underline the FUNCTION OF GUILT: maintaining socio-historically established asymmetrical power relations between men and women.

We also highlight the position of Da Costa *et al.* (2022, p. 96) and Feltes' voice as cited by the authors: “[...] the prototypical categorization of violence is something that depends on the direct experiences of the subjects, whose meanings are related to historical and sociocultural factors. Feltes (2007, p. 259) states that violence is not a phenomenon inherent to certain actions, it is the product of a certain biopsychosociocultural experience”<sup>13</sup> (Da Costa *et al.*, 2002, p. 96).

By illuminating how VIOLENCE is conceptualized by the narrators and scrutinizing the roots of this conceptualization, the present study looked critically at discourse, linked cognition to the dialectical relationship between discourse, social practices, and action, and acted politically and morally in an attempt to contribute to the awareness of society about the different forms that gender violence takes. In the data, violence takes the form of PUNISHMENT with harm to women's mental health (Ministério Da Saúde, 2002). In this

<sup>13</sup> The original reads: “[...] a categorização prototípica da questão da violência é algo que depende de experiência diretas dos sujeitos, as quais os sentidos têm relação com os fatores históricos e socioculturais. Feltes (2007, p. 259) afirma que a violência não é um fenômeno inerente a determinadas ações, é produto de uma determinada experiência biopsicossociocultural”.

sense, we believe that we are also indirectly contributing to the mental and psychological health of women, by theoretically and analytically demonstrating the manipulation to which they are subjected.

Naturally, given the complexity of the causation metaphor, there is a metaphorical system in the data that CAN BE FURTHER EXPLORED, SINCE SELF-CONTROL IS BEING IN A LOCATION or CONSCIOUS, and CONTROL OF THE SELF IS POSSESSION OF AN OBJECT, as Lakoff and Johnson (1999) explain. They are metaphors that structure a varied range of experiences, positive and negative. However, given the scope of the present work, we will keep this development for future studies.

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