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PROPOSAL FOR A DEFINITION OF FILIO-PARENTAL VIOLENCE: CONSENSUS OF THE SPANISH SOCIETY FOR THE STUDY OF FILIO-PARENTAL VIOLENCE (SEVIFIP)

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La Violencia Filio-parental (VFP) ha suscitado en los últimos años el interés de numerosos investigadores y profesionales del ámbito socio-sanitario, educativo y judicial. Sin embargo, no existe un consenso sobre el concepto, encontrándonos en la literatura científica diferentes definiciones sobre esta problemática. La confusión y la disparidad de resultados encontrados en las diferentes investigaciones, induce a preguntarse si en todos los casos se está hablando del mismo problema. El presente artículo tiene como objetivo: presentar a aquellas personas interesadas en este problema, una definición que sirva de herramienta para futuras investigaciones y propuestas de intervención que posibilite delimitar lo que es y no es VFP. Tras una revisión de la literatura específica, la recopilación y selección de las principales definiciones disponibles y su análisis y codificación, se crearon diferentes categorías que fueron debatidas por los 11 profesionales que formaron el panel de expertos. El resultado obtenido es una definición consensuada, precisa y practica sobre VFP expresada en un lenguaje con perspectiva de género.
Palabras clave: *Violencia Filio-parental, Definición, Investigación VFP, Criterios de exclusión.*

In recent years, many scholars and professionals from social, healthcare, educational and judicial fields have begun to pay increasing attention to filio-parental or child-to-parent violence (CPV). This emerging phenomenon, however, does not seem to have a consensuated definition in the relevant scientific literature. The confusion found around this concept, as well as the disparate results arising from different research projects, lead us to wonder whether they are all referring to the same problem. The aim of this paper is to establish clearly what child-to-parent violence is, and to provide as neutral and clear as possible a definition of the term, which will be useful and accessible to everyone interested in this problem. This definition may also play a significant role as a tool in future research and intervention proposals. After selecting the main definitions from those available in the specific literature, these were scrutinized and codified to find the categories relevant to the analysis, which were then debated by 11 experts in a discussion forum. As a result, we provide a precise and useful definition of CPV that has been phrased using language with a gender perspective.
Key words: *Child-to-parent violence, Definition; Research on CPV, Exclusion criteria.*

Violence in the family, also known as intrafamilial or domestic violence, has existed for centuries, but only in the last few decades has it generated social concern and aroused academic and professional interest. The forms of intrafamilial violence that have attracted the most attention have been –in chronological order of emergence in society– child abuse, intimate partner violence and, most recently, filio-parental violence, upward violence or child-to-parent violence (CPV). Despite its short history, the visibility of the problem has emerged strongly in recent years, particularly in Spain (Pereira & Bertino, 2009). An example of this is the founding of the Spanish Society for the Study of Filio-Parental Violence (SEVIFIP) in 2013.

The statistics available so far on this phenomenon can lead to different degrees of prevalence depending on the criteria chosen and adopted. Thus, if we analyze a single aggression, in the general population, we find a prevalence of 93.8% for psychological violence in adolescents of 13-18 years and of 8.9% if we analyze physical violence. However, if we consider the criterion of recurrence (at least 3 physical and 6 psychological aggressions during the last year) the data are moderated, with 14.2% for psychological aggression and 3.2% for physical aggression (Calvete et al. 2013).

The official figures of the Attorney General's Office show an increase in detection in the first years of registration and some stability in the figures in recent years (4,898 in 2015; 4,753 in 2014; 4,659 in 2013; 4,936 in 2012; 5,377 in 2011; 4,995 in 2010; 5,209 in 2009; 4,211 in 2008; and 2,683 in 2007). These data reflect the judicial relevance of the problem, especially if one takes into account the fact that a large number of cases are not reported or they are unimpeachable due to the age of the perpetrator (under 14) so they are not counted in the judicial statistics.

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Aside from the definitions that we will describe later, in Spain the volume of research has grown exponentially, so much so that it would exceed the objectives of this paper to summarize the state of the issue. Just as an example, we can mention some of the lines of research developed that go from analysis of the families (e.g., Bertino, Calvete, Pereira, Orue, & Montes, 2011; Calvete, Orue, Bertino, González, Montes, Padilla, & Pereira, 2014; Calvete, Orue, Gámez-Guadix, Del Hoyo-Bilbao & López de Arroyabe, 2015; Contreras & Cano, 2014; Gámez-Guadix, Jaureguizar, Almendros, & Carrobles, 2012; García & Gracia, 2010), through the characteristics of the aggressors (e.g., Calvete, Orue, & Gámez-Guadix, 2013, Calvete, Orue, & Sampedro, 2011; Contreras & Cano, 2015, Cuervo & Rechea, 2010, González-Álvarez, Morán & García-Vera, 2011; Ibabe & Jaureguizar, 2011a; Ibabe, Jaureguizar, & Bentler, 2013) or the intervention (e.g., Aroca, Bellver & Alba, 2013; Pereira, 2011; Pereira, Bertino, Romero, & Llorente, 2006), to specific aspects such as the role of bi-directional violence or social learning (e.g., Aroca, Bellver, & Alba, 2012; Gámez-Guadix & Calvete, 2012; Ibabe & Jaureguizar, 2011b). The analysis of risk factors has received particular interest in recent years (Ibabe et al., 2013; Lozano-Martínez, Estévez, & Carballo, 2013; Martínez, Estévez, Jiménez, & Velilla, 2015). Although all of these studies have CPV as the object of study, they do not use the same definition, which may be an explanatory factor of the disparity of results that they show.

The first published reference on CPV is attributed to the work of Harbin and Madden (1979), who described a new syndrome of family violence: abuse towards parents. Despite the fact that more than three decades have passed since its publication, the problems of defining this type of violence and the determination of characteristics are constant in different studies (e.g., Aroca, Lorenzo-Moledo, & Miró-Pérez, 2014; Ibabe, Jaureguizar, & Díaz, 2007; Jaureguizar & Ibabe, 2014; Tew & Nixon, 2010), and, at present, it is still a little known and sometimes confusing phenomenon. In this sense, Tew and Nixon (2010) point out that there is little consensus as to what constitutes CPV, and Morán, González-Álvarez, Gesteira and García-Vera (2012) indicate that the lack of a single consensus is generating confusion and may be one of the factors responsible for the wide variability of the prevalence data. The marked increase in interest in the problem creates the need to define the issue accurately. It has even manifested itself in scientific databases, such as PsycINFO, with a large variety of concepts that in English can be confused with cases of CPV but in some cases even allude to the opposite aspect (e.g., "parent abuse" versus "child-parent abuse" (Fernández, Fernández, Salvador, Cano, & Contreras, 2014). Problems concerning concepts and definitions are frequent in the area of family violence, which particularly affects the comparability of different studies, models, statistics or proposals, as reflected in the 2002 WHO Report on Violence and Health (McCue, 2008).

At the international level, the studies considered to be benchmark works, include those by Cottrell in Canada (Cottrell, 2001, 2005; Cottrell & Monk, 2004), Gallagher in Australia (Gallagher, 2004, 2008) and more recently those of Holt in England (Holt, 2012, 2016). In the Spanish context, references began to appear 11 years ago, with some specific manuals on the subject that dealt with concepts or types of violence by children towards their parents, such as the "Emperor's Syndrome" (Garrido, 2005), and the "little dictator" (Urra, 2006). In 2006, Pereira introduced the term "violencia filio-parental" ["filio-parental violence" or "child-to-parent violence"], which is currently used in Spanish to refer to this phenomenon. However, although there are several definition proposals, in many cases it is easy to confuse the type of problem that is being discussed.

Cottrell (2005) discussed the substantive issues in defining CPV. Based on her own definition of 2001 (see table 1), she pointed to a number of limitations that should be improved in future proposals: 1) we cannot be sure that all aggressive adolescents are trying to seek control (it may simply be an expression of anger); 2) there are actions that are not intended to harm (e.g., in children with disabilities or the behavior of young people in general caused by their irresponsibility); 3) the perception of abuse is subjective: there are professionals who may see the behavior of the adolescent as abusive when parents do not; 4) should "any act" (a single act) be included or a should series of acts be necessary within a period of time? Taking into account the limitations of a definition, the author affirmed that definitions may be mere words but, nevertheless, they are essential to give meaning to what happens. Therefore, it is essential to establish who is involved in this type of violence, how and why, aspects that this work seeks to specify (paying special attention to the type of limitations noted in previous studies).

Therefore, the adoption of a concrete and clear definition is essential to delimit what we are referring to when we talk about CPV. The objective of this article is to present the consensus definition proposed by SEVIFIP, in order for it to be used by all professionals working with CPV.

METHOD

Participants

The panel of experts was formed by 11 professionals: eight clinicians and three lecturers and researchers from different institutions. Among the clinicians who participated there were four psychotherapists and the director of the Euskarri center (CPV intervention center, Bilbao). The clinical director and the general manager of the residential therapeutic center Campus Unidos (RecUrra, Madrid) were also part of the panel of experts, as well as the clinical director of the CPV program of the Fundación Pioneros (Logroño). With regards to the academic experts that participated in the panel discussion, there were two lecturers/researchers from the University of Deusto (Bilbao) and one lecturer/researcher specialized in CPV from the University of Barcelona (Barcelona).

Procedure

SEVIFIP proposed to initiate a panel of experts (understood according to the terms defined by the European Commission,

2014) in order to agree on a definition of CPV. First, a search was carried out for the main definitions available in the national and international bibliography. To do this, the theoretical frameworks of the studies available in the main databases (PsycInfo, Scopus, Editorial Sage, Google Academic, and Psicodoc) and manuals published in Spanish or English were reviewed, and the most relevant definitions collected. The following search terms were used: violencia filio-parental;

TABLE 1
PRINCIPAL DEFINITIONS RELATED TO CHILD-TO-PARENT VIOLENCE

Reference	Definition	*
Harbin y Madden (1979)	Physical attacks or verbal and nonverbal threats or physical damage (p.1288)	
Straus (1979)	Violent behaviors such as biting, hitting, scratching, throwing objects, pushing, verbal abuse and threats.	
Kumagai (1981)	Violent acts of the child against the members of their direct family such as parents, siblings or grandparents.	
Dugas, Mouren y Halfon (1985)	Acts of aggression accompanied or not by verbal threats and insults, accompanied by repetitive actions against one or both parents or their substitutes with the exclusion of parricide.	
Urra (1994)	They even suffer from the attempt to understand what their "dominated" interlocutor thinks and feels. They have little capacity for introspection and self-control. (p.1)	
Herzberger (1996)	It is usually the child's response to a consistent pattern of violent parenting. (p.345)	
Cottrell (2001)	Any act of a son [or daughter] aimed at causing physical, psychological or economic harm in order to gain power and control over a parent (p. 3)	
Paterson, Luntz, Perlesz y Cotton (2002)	It is considered violence towards the parents if family members feel threatened, intimidated or controlled by violent behavior and if they believe that they have to adjust their own behavior to accommodate threats or anticipate violence. (p. 90)	1
Cottrell y Monk (2004)	Any action of adolescents aimed at causing economic, psychological or physical harm to parents and/or persons occupying their place (p.1080)	2
Gallagher (2004)	Children's physical violence, verbal aggression, destructive tendencies, and emotional abuse are all part of a pattern of behavior apparently aimed at controlling, or at least disempowering, parents. (p.5)	
Garrido (2005)	Boy (also girls) of a non-marginal class (although they may be poor) who, while living in their house, extort their parents in order to obtain things or privileges, through the use of explicit or veiled threats, or cause explicit verbal and even physical violence to achieve this goal. Over time, and in cases of greater severity (i.e., psychopaths), they may be more motivated by the mere fact of enjoying control and mastery of the situation. They believe they have the right to impose their will on parents whom they consider unworthy of looking after them.	3
Pereira (2006)	Repeated behaviors of physical (aggression, hitting, pushing, throwing objects), verbal (repeated insults, threats) or non-verbal violence (threatening gestures, breaking of valued objects) aimed at the parents or the adults who occupy their place. (p.8)	4
Roperti (2006)	The individual who carries out behaviors of abuse towards their parents, who solves problems or releases tension by carrying out destructive behaviors toward the home, preferably against their progenitors. (p.26)	5
Altea (2008)	All acts performed by the children against their parents, guardians or caregivers with the aim of using them or tyrannizing them. With this action the children seek to cause permanent annoyance, using misunderstanding as an axiom; they threaten or attack them in order to respond to a growing hedonism and nihilism; they show behaviors of detachment by transmitting to their parents that they do not love them. (p.15)	6
Aroca (2010)	Where the son or daughter acts intentionally and consciously with the desire to cause harm, prejudice or suffering in their parents, repeatedly over time, and with the immediate aim of gaining power, control and domination over their victims to achieve what they want by means of psychological, economic or physical violence (p. 136)	7
Coogan (2011)	An abuse of power through which the child or adolescent tries to dominate, coerce and control others in the family. (p.349)	8
Holt (2013)	A behavioral pattern that uses verbal, economic, physical or emotional means to practice power and exercise control over parents. (p.1)	9
Urra (2015)	"Every act performed by the children against the parents, with the aim of tyrannizing them. Seeking to cause permanent damage and/or annoyance, using misunderstanding as an axiom. They threaten or attack in order to impose their power and control. They show detachment. They convey to the parents that they do not love them. Occasionally it may be related to disorders and addictions, but these are not the cause of this violence that has as its object the absolute submission of the victim "(p.9)	10

*Note: The numbered definitions were discussed in the panel of experts.

maltrato de progenitores/padres; child-to-parent violence; child/adolescent/youth violence towards parents.

After the compilation of the main definitions, each of them was analyzed and evaluated independently to extract the inclusion and exclusion criteria indicated in the Results section. This process (the panel of experts) materialized through a direct exchange of information among all of the participants on an online forum between October 2014 and January 2015.

Analysis of data

Qualitative techniques of analysis and content coding were applied (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Based on the definitions collected, the panel of experts analyzed and codified the definitions independently, subsequently putting together the categories created on the aspects contained in the definitions (e.g., type of violence, type of victim), jointly identifying the issues common to all of them. The categories were formed in an inductive way, i.e., based on the analysis of the material obtained in the bibliographic review (Rodríguez, Lorenzo, & Herrera, 2005), presented early in the process. After the pooling of these categories, and their verification, reflection and discussion by the 11 experts, an agreement was reached that led to the definition of CPV, thus increasing the internal validity (Suárez, del Moral, & González, 2013).

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the compilation of definitions published up to the date of the review. The exclusion criteria were: repetitive definitions, those later corrected by the authors themselves, and incomplete ones in comparison to the other available definitions. The inclusion criteria were frequent use in the scientific literature and increased information compared to the available definitions. After the compilation they were shown to the panel of experts, numbered according to their chronological order.

From the analysis of the definitions, ten categories were identified, which were later reduced by half. The criterion of admission of each of the components of the final definition was the acceptance by the majority of the experts based on clinical and/or experiential judgment. The literal extractions of comments are presented in italics.

Categories to be included

Firstly, the need to include the aspects considered to be essential in the definition of CPV was assessed. These were as follows:

- ✔ Frequency of the aggressive behavior: whether it is recurrent or an isolated event. All components of the expert group agreed that the violence must be recurrent: *"This point is especially important in research, so prevalence does not skyrocket and is as representative as possible, without overestimating the phenomenon, and giving it the importance it deserves."*
- ✔ Receiver of the aggression: the option of specifying to whom the violence was directed was discussed and there was unanimous agreement on the need to specify this. The concept of parent must refer to both sexes and also the need was stressed *"to include the possibility that victims can not only be parents, but also other adults in loco parentis"* (another family member or caregiver, for example), as well as to include *"parents and parent couples made up of two persons of the same sex."*
- ✔ Types of violence: the possibility was discussed of including the types of violence that CPV could cover, as was done in the definition of other types of intrafamilial violence. On this occasion the opinion was also unanimous regarding the inclusion of large categories of violence (physical, psychological and economic) and not specific behaviors, with arguments such as: *"there are situations in which children decide and force expenses that generate indebtedness, which parents do not agree with, but against which they cannot do anything else."*
- ✔ Exclusion criteria: all of the experts agreed that a high-value contribution to the definition was the inclusion of exclusion criteria in order to specify the cases that come under the label. Based on the criteria available in other definitions, on the clinicians themselves and their experience, and on what is considered not to refer to CPV, it was agreed to specify the exclusion of the definition of: isolated aggressions, those caused by psychological alterations (transient or stable) or homicides that have no history of violence. Although the overlap of CPV with the abuse of the elderly by their children was discussed (with arguments such as the difference in the role of dependence of the victims and the aggressors), it was not possible to reach a consensus on what allusion would allow a better differentiation.
- ✔ Language with a gender perspective: finally, the importance of using inclusive and non-sexist language in the definition was unanimously accepted. Most of the definitions used to date do not attend to this aspect, which seems relevant to contemplate.

Categories to be excluded

Based on the existing definitions, a number of aspects were proposed which were not necessary to maintain in the new definition. These are the categories that were excluded:

- ✔ Age: the option of specifying the age of the aggressor was evaluated, since it may be an issue that influences the determination of whether or not a problem of CPV exists. After some debate, 7 of the 11 participants supported the idea of not specifying the age because there is no scientific criterion for doing so. The possibility was noted that, regardless of age, CPV could exist whenever the victim and the aggressor exercised roles of caregiver and person under care respectively. *"It would be convenient to delimit the age of the aggressor (...) but, if a 50 year old maintains the role of dependent and carries out this type of behavior against their parents, that individual is also exercising CPV, so age is not an exclusive criterion."* On the other hand, although the existing definitions may refer to an age group such as "adolescents", there is no objec-

tive criterion for delimiting a specific age, and experience tells us that this stage of the life cycle extends widely in both directions.

- ✔ Intentionality or control/power: the possibility of indicating intentionality or control/power by the aggressor was analyzed. However, 9 professionals proposed that this criterion should be excluded due to the difficulty in establishing the intent and purpose of the aggressions. *"We have carried out numerous in-depth interviews with adolescents who have exercised severe CPV and [...] we have carefully evaluated aspects such as intentionality and the conclusion is that it is not always present. I remember some teenagers acting in a state of anger and being unable to explain why they acted as they did."* Clinical experience shows the difficulty of specifying intentionality in many cases of violence. Instead, it was decided to include exclusionary grounds that would help to differentiate those cases that do not show intentionality due to different issues.
- ✔ Cohabitation: the possibility of including cohabitation in the definition was analyzed, but all the members of the group considered that it was not an essential aspect. *"With regard to cohabitation, I have had contact with parents who continue to experience violent relationships and dominance from their children who have been living outside of the family home for more than a year."*
- ✔ Motivation and type of aggression: the need to specify whether the violence was reactive or instrumental was discussed. Finally, all members of the panel of experts considered it convenient not to include this specification. *"I am happy to omit the reactive/proactive issue because, as indicated in many families or contexts, it is a dynamic of normalized interaction and it is almost impossible to distinguish reaction from instrumental use."*

Proposed definition

After analyzing the definitions and reaching consensus on the categories to be excluded and included, the SEVIFIP Group of Experts proposed the final definition of CPV as follows: *Repeated behavior of physical, psychological (verbal or non-verbal) or economic violence, directed toward the parents or the people who occupy their place. Excluded are one-off aggressions that occur in a state of diminished consciousness which disappear when upon recovery (intoxications, withdrawal syndromes, delirious states or hallucinations), those caused by (transient or stable) psychological disorders (autism and severe mental deficiency) and parricide without history of previous aggressions.*

DISCUSSION

The objective of this work was to present the proposed definition of CPV agreed by SEVIFIP, with the aim for it to be able to be used by all professionals working with CPV. Coinciding with most of the available definitions (except Straus, 1979 and Pereira, 2006), it was decided not to include specific examples of violent behavior. It was decided to distinguish between forms of violence, including physical and psychological damage, which may be verbal (insults, threats, etc.) or non-verbal (throwing objects, gestural threats, etc.), and adding economic damage (breaking precious or valued objects and getting into debt). The need for recurrence of the violence and the exclusion of specific events also coincides with previous criteria (Aroca, 2010; Dugas et al, 1985; Holt, 2013; Pereira, 2006). As for the victims, the definition is based on works by different authors, in which members of the direct family are included (Coogan, 2011; Kumagai, 1981) or those who occupy their place as guardians or caregivers (Altea, 2008; Dugas et al., 1985; Pereira, 2006).

Unlike most definitions, we chose to include exclusion criteria which was available in some papers (Dugas et al., 1985; Pereira 2006). Also, it was not considered necessary to point out the intentionality of the aggressor to produce harm or the seeking of control and power, unlike many of the recent definitions (Altea, 2008; Aroca, 2010; Coogan, 2011; Cottrell 2001; Gallagher 2004; Holt, 2013; Urra, Sancho, Atarés, Buale, & Isabel, 2015). This was decided due to the difficulty in identifying this intentionality and establishing a starting point of blaming the children, when in a significant number of cases there are two-way aggressions (Gámez-Guadix & Calvete, 2012; Ibabe & Jaureguizar, 2011b; Bertino et al., 2011; Bertino & García de Galdeano, 2011).

Regarding the aggressors, the studies indicate as prevalent ages the range between 12 and 17 years (Cottrell & Monk, 2004; Romero, Melero, Cánovas, Antolin, 2005; Routt & Anderson, 2011; Sheehan, 1997; Walsh & Krienert, 2007). Initially, the panel of experts pointed to the idea that the perpetrator was a "minor or young adult", but it was ultimately decided not to include it due to the existence of cases that exceed those ages.

This study is not without its limitations, including the relatively small number of participants in the panel of experts, which should be expanded in future approaches. Regarding the results, it is important to mention that although different professionals from some centers expressed their individual opinion and had a vote in the decision, other centers agreed previously in a group and then one or two experts expressed the collective opinion, counting as one or two votes, without weighting for the number of experts who had participated in that center.

Finally, although the "World Report on Violence and Health" mentions the risk of fragmenting the phenomenon of violence through specialization (OMS [WHO], 2002), we consider it appropriate to take into account the differences in the phenomenon of CPV with regard to other intrafamilial models.

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CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

There is no conflict of interest.

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