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DOCUMENTOS

"IT'S ALL ONE AND THE SAME": PARTNER VIOLENCE AND ANIMAL MALTREATMENT AS EXPERIENCED BY WOMEN IN ECUADOR

"TODO ES UNA SOLA": VIOLENCIA DE PAREJA Y MALTRATO ANIMAL. EXPERIENCIAS VIVIDAS POR MUJERES EN ECUADOR

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Received: September 2024
Accepted: January 2025

ABSTRACT

Through eleven in-depth interviews with women in Ecuador who have suffered intimate partner violence and exposure to animal maltreatment by partner, we explore the interactive dynamics of both types of violence. Within the framework of green and narrative victimology, three main conclusions emerged from a hybrid thematic analysis of participants' accounts: the expansive and escalating nature of the violence, the role of the human-animal bond in both intensifying and attenuating victimization, and heightened vulnerability due to inadequate responses**.** Findings advocate for holistic interdisciplinary prevention and intervention strategies and highlight the need to modify gender socio-cultural patterns and address the normalization of these two types of violence.

https://doi.org/10.36151/DALPS.062 ISSN: 3020-1071

KEYWORDS

Partner violence; Ecuador; human-animal bond; animal abuse; victimology.

RESUMEN

A través de once entrevistas en profundidad con mujeres de Ecuador que sufrieron violencia de pareja y la exposición al maltrato animal por la pareja, exploramos la dinámica interactiva de ambos tipos de violencia. En el marco de la victimología verde y narrativa, de un análisis temático híbrido de los relatos de las mujeres surgieron tres conclusiones principales: el carácter expansivo y ascendiente de la violencia; la influencia del vínculo humano-animal tanto intensificando como atenuando la victimización, y una elevada vulnerabilidad debido a respuestas inadecuadas. Los hallazgos abogan por estrategias holísticas e interdisciplinarias de prevención e intervención y subrayan la necesidad de modificar los patrones socioculturales de género y abordar la normalización de estos dos tipos de violencia.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Violencia contra la pareja; Ecuador; vínculo humano-animal; maltrato animal; victimología.

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1. INTRODUCTION

According to UN Women (n.d.-a), intimate partner violence (IPV) is "any pattern of behavior that is used to gain or maintain power and control over an intimate partner. It encompasses all physical, sexual, emotional, economic and psychological actions or threats of actions that influence another person". Data provided by the UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS DIVISION[1] documents that IPV is the most common form of violence against women in developed and developing countries. Around one third of women worldwide have experienced physical and/or sexual violence by an intimate partner.

In a systematic review of national prevalence estimates, BOTT et al.[2] reported that 40% of Ecuadorian ever-partnered women aged 15 to 49 years indicated having experienced physical and/or sexual IPV during their lifetime, which is one of the highest proportions in the Americas. The first National Survey on Family Relations and Violence against Women found that almost one of every two women (48.7%) aged 15 or over in Ecuador had been a victim of some form of psychological, physical, sexual and/

1 UNITED NATIONS STATISTICS DIVISION. Intimate partner violence is the most common form of violence against women (2020). In: https://www.un.org/en/desa/world%E2%80%99s-women-2020-intimate-partner-violence-most-common-form-violence-against-women

2 BOTT, S., GUEDES, A., RUIZ-CELIS, A.P., MENDOZA, J.A. Intimate partner violence in the Americas: a systematic review and reanalysis of national prevalence estimates in Revista Panameña de Salud Pública 43 (2019). DOI:10.26633/RPSP.2019.26

or economic aggression by a male intimate partner[3]. Since then, despite the country's efforts to address violence against women, a second national survey[4] still found that almost 43% of Ecuadorian women (15 or over) had experienced IPV by a male partner. A recent report documents that 321 feminicides took place in Ecuador in 2023, 4 in 10 perpetrated by the victim's intimate partner[5]. Some authors suggest that efforts to reduce violence towards women in Ecuador are thwarted by the widespread acceptance of violence and social norms favoring traditional machismo[6] and male dominance[7]. Exposure to IPV during childhood can have detrimental and long-lasting repercussions[8] has been linked to IPV perpetration, stronger beliefs that violence in relationships is acceptable, and increases women's risk of IPV victimization[9].

Animal maltreatment in the context of relationships with IPV

A substantial body of literature[10] has documented the co-occurrence of animal maltreatment and IPV[11]. In a systematic review of studies on this topic, CLEARY

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3 CAMACHO, G. La violencia de género contra las mujeres en el Ecuador: Análisis de los resultados de la Encuesta Nacional sobreRelaciones Familiares y Violencia de Género contra las Mujeres. Consejo Nacional para la Igualdad de Género (2014), in https://oig.cepal.org/sites/default/files/violencia_de_gnero_ecuador.pdf

4 INEC. Encuesta Nacional sobre Relaciones Familiares y Violencia de Género contra las Mujeres — ENVIGMU. Instituto Nacional de Estadística y Censos (2019). In: https://www.ecuadorencifras.gob.ec/documentos/web-inec/Estadisticas_Sociales/Violencia_de_genero_2019/Boletin_Tecnico_ENVIGMU.pdf

5 FUNDACIÓN ALDEA. Violencia femi(ni)cida: una pandemia que mata en Ecuador a mujeres y niñas (2023). In: http://www.fundacionaldea.org/noticias-aldea/mapa2023

6 Traditional machismo is a sociocultural construct that encompasses beliefs, values and attitudes that justify and defend the superiority and domination of men over women, dictate distinct male and female gender roles, devalue women and characterize masculinity as aggressive, controlling and dominant (Oblitas Béjar, 2009; Cevallos-Neira & Monserrath Jerves-Hermida, 2017).

7 EDEBY, A., SAN SEBASTIÁN, M. Prevalence and sociogeographical inequalities of violence against women in Ecuador: a cross-sectional study in International Journal of Equity in Health 20 (2021) 130. DOI:10.1186/s12939-021-01456-9

8 MAS, M.R., ACEBO DEL VALLE, G.M., GAIBOR, M.I., CHÁVEZ, P.J., NÚÑEZ, F.R., GONZÁLEZ, L., GUARNIZO, J.B., GRUEZO, A.G. Domestic violence and its repercussions in children in the Province of Bolivar, Ecuador in Revista Colombiana de Psiquiatría 49/1 (2020) 23-28. DOI: 10.1016/j.rcp.2018.04.006

9 ARGÜELLO, Y., COSTALES, E.D., MEDINA, M.C. Violencia vivida y presenciada durante la infancia de mujeres víctimas de violencia de pareja íntima: una revisión narrativa de la literatura (2020), in: https://repositorio.uisek.edu.ec/handle/123456789/4049

10 ASCIONE, F.R., WEBER, C.V., THOMPSON, T.M., HEATH, J., MARUYAMA, M., HAYASHI, K. Battered pets and domestic violence: Animal abuse reported by women experiencing intimate violence and by nonabused women, in Violence Against Women 13/4 (2007) 354-373. DOI:10.1177/1077801207299201
CARLISLE-FRANK. P.L., FRANK, J.M., NIELSEN, L. Selective battering of the family pet in Anthrozoos 17/1 (2004) 26-42. DOI:10.2752/089279304786991864

et al.[12] found that a high proportion of IPV victims[13] also indicated exposure to animal maltreatment (a range of 21% to 89% across studies) and that fear for their animals affected victims' decisions to seek support, report the abuse, and terminate the violent relationship. Studies that examined data accessed from women recruited in domestic violence programs and comparison samples[14] (with no reported IPV) provide compelling evidence that animal maltreatment is significantly associated to IPV[15]. Partner animal maltreatment has been identified as a risk factor for IPV against women[16] and some studies further indicate that animal maltreatment can be a marker for severe IPV or grave-risk forms of IPV against women[17]. SIMMONS & LEHMANN[18] found that abusive partners who also maltreat animals use more controlling behaviors and more forms of IPV against women than other abusers. Exposure to animal abuse during childhood has been linked to justifications of IPV and may help perpetuate the cycle of violence[19]. These findings have important implications for strategies that aim to prevent and address IPV against women, as well as animal abuse. However, most of this research has been conducted in North America, Europe and Australia, almost exclusively in prosperous economies.

This article focuses on exploring the interactive dynamics and impacts of concomitant IPV and companion animal maltreatment by partner in Ecuador, a still understudied subject of research, particularly in the South American context. After detailing the

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11 GALLAGHER, B., ALLEN, M., JONES, B. Animals abuse and Intimate Partner Violence pets: Researching the link and its significance in Ireland in Irish Veterinary Journal 61/10 (2008) 658-670. DOI:10.1186/2046-0481-61-10-658

12 CLEARY, M., THAPA, D.K., WEST, S., WESTMAN, M., KORNHABER, R. Animal abuse in the context of adult intimate partner violence: A systematic review in Aggression and Violent Behavior 61 (2021) 1-17. DOI: 10.1016/j.avb.2021.101676

13 Although we acknowledge that the term Survivor emphasizes empowerment, for the sake of brevity we utilize IPV Victim as a synonym IPV Victim/Survivor

14 VOLANT, A., JOHNSON, J., GULLONE, E., COLEMAN, G. The Relationship Between Domestic Violence and Animal Abuse: An Australian Study in Journal of Interpersonal Violence 23/9 (2008) 1277-1295. DOI:10.1177//0886260508314309

15 Op. cit. ASCIONE, F.R., WEBER, C.V., THOMPSON, T.M., HEATH, J., MARUYAMA, M., HAYASHI, K. (2007)

16 WALTON-MOSS, B.J., MANGANELLO, J., FRYE, V., CAMPBELL, J.C. Risk factors for intimate partner violence and associated injury among urban women in Journal of Community Health 30 (2005) 377-389. DOI: 10.1007/s10900-005-5518-x

17 BARRETT, B.J., FITZGERALD, A., STEVENSON, R., CHEUNG, C.H. Animal maltreatment as a risk marker of more frequent and severe forms of intimate partner violence in Journal of Interpersonal Violence 35/23-24 (2020) 5131-5156. DOI:10.1177/0886260517719542

18 SIMMONS, C.A., LEHMANN, P. Exploring the link between pet abuse and controlling behaviors in violent relationships in Journal of Interpersonal Violence 22/9 (2007) 1211-1222. DOI:10.1177/0886260507303734

19 BERNUZ, M.J. El maltrato animal como violencia doméstica y de género. Un análisis sobre las víctimas, in Revista de Victimología/Journal of Victimology 2 (2015), 97-123. DOI:10.12827/RVJV.2.05

theoretical framework and considering how findings from different disciplines may help us understand the intersections of these two types of violence, we describe the specific purposes for the current study and our methodological approach.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH TO AN INTERSECTORAL PROBLEM

Recent research indicates that animal maltreatment in the context of IPV is a multifaceted and complex phenomenon. Animal maltreatment can precede, coincide with or follow IPV, can develop under different scenarios, have diverse expressions, motivations or purposes and provokes tangible and intangible consequences over a variety of victims[20]. Pet abuse is listed under the use of intimidation in PENCE & PAYMAR's[21] Power and Control Wheel, an extensively used model that illustrates the tactics used by abusive men to exert control over their female partners. Several studies now document that animal maltreatment can take many forms, including deliberate neglect, confinement, threats to harm or get rid of pets and can be instrumentalized also as a means of isolating, coercing, terrorizing, inflicting emotional pain and punishing IPV victims[22]. The "Power and Control Wheel on Animal Abuse and Domestic Violence"[23] depicts a circular conceptualization of isolation (impede access to pet); threats (to harm or get rid of pets if she leaves or shows disagreement); legal abuse (battles over pets or theft charges if she leaves with the pet); denying and blaming (her or the pet for the violence); emotional abuse (remove pet to eliminate a source of social support. Forced participation in sexual acts with animals); economic abuse (refusing to spend money on the animal's care); intimidation (demonstrating what he could do to her); and using children (intimidating them into blaming their mothers or remaining quiet about the abuse).

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20 ALLEYNE, E., PARFITT, C. Adult-perpetrated Animal Abuse: A Systematic Literature Review, in Trauma, Violence, and Abuse 20/3 (2017) 344-357. DOI:10.1177/1524838017708785
HADEN S.C., MCDONALD, S.E., BOOTH, L.J., ASCIONE, F.R., BLACKELOCK, H. An exploratory study of domestic violence: Perpetrators' reports of violence against animals in Anthrozoös 31/3 (2018) 337-352. DOI:10.1080/08927936.2018.1455459
HOFFER, T., HARGREAVES-CORMANY, H., MUIRHEAD, Y., MELOY, J.R. Violence in animal cruelty offenders (Berlin 2018)

21 PENCE, E., PAYMAR, M. Education groups for men who batter: The Duluth model (New York 1993).

22 FITZGERALD, A.J., BARRETT, B.J., STEVENSON, R., CHEUNG, C.H. Animal maltreatment in the context of intimate partner violence: a manifestation of power and control? in Violence Against women 25/15 (2019) 1806-1828. DOI:10.1177/1077801218824993

23 NATIONAL LINK COALITION. The "power and control wheel" of animal abuse and domestic violence (2017). In https://nationallinkcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/DV-Power-Control-large-logo-caption.jpg

The concept of the human-animal bond (HAB), understood as an affective and reciprocal companion relationship[24], can help us to interpret some of the research findings that document a link between IPV and animal maltreatment[25], as well as those that inform on victims' experiences[26]. Since the eighties, HAB research has evolved to focus not only on the importance of this bond for human-animal interactions, but also for human health and wellbeing[27].

Many women experiencing IPV attribute great importance to their relationships with companion animals and often consider them family[28]. Abusive partners can therefore exploit these emotional bonds to control and manipulate their victims[29]. Partner threats to harm animals have even served to coerce women into committing illegal acts[30]. Yet, animals can be a main source of emotional support[31] and have protective effects on the suicidality of abused women[32]. As TAYLOR states: "where there is spousal and/or child abuse, and there is a companion animal present, there is a high likelihood that some form of animal abuse will also be occurring (…) On the other side of the coin, research

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24 HILL, L., WINEFIELD, H., BENNETT, P. Are stronger bonds better? Examining the relationship between the human-animal bond and human social support, and its impact on resilience in Australian Psychologist 55 (2020) 729-738. DOI: 10.1111/ap.12466

25 Op. cit. ASCIONE, F.R., WEBER, C.V., THOMPSON, T.M., HEATH, J., MARUYAMA, M., HAYASHI, K. (2007)
Op. cit. BARRETT, B.J., FITZGERALD, A., STEVENSON, R., CHEUNG, C.H. (2020)
HARTMAN, C.A., HAGEMAN, T., WILLIAMS, J.H., ASCIONE, F.R. Intimate partner violence and animal abuse in an immigrant-rich sample of mother-child dyads recruited from domestic violence programs in Journal of Interpersonal Violence 33/6 (2018) 1030-1047. DOI:10.1177/0886260515614281

26 FLYNN, C.P. Woman's best friend: Pet abuse and the role of companion animals in the lives of battered women in Violence Against Women 6/2 (2000) 162-177. DOI:10.1177/10778010022181778
NEWBERRY, M. Pets in danger: Exploring the link between domestic violence and animal in Aggression and Violent Behavior 34 (2017) 273-281. DOI: 10.1016/j.avb.2016.11.007

27 HINES, L.M. Historical perspectives on the human-animal bond in American Behavioral Scientist 47/1 (2003) 7-15. DOI:10.1177/0002764203255206
HOSEY, G., MELFI, V. Human-animal interactions, relationships and bonds: A review and analysis of the literature in International Journal of Comparative Psychology 27/1 (2014) 117-142. DOI:10.1201/9780429059544-1

28 Op. cit. ASCIONE, F.R., WEBER, C.V., THOMPSON, T.M., HEATH, J., MARUYAMA, M., HAYASHI, K. (2007)
Op. cit. FLYNN, C.P. (2000)

29 Op. cit. CLEARY, M., THAPA, D.K., WEST, S., WESTMAN, M., KORNHABER, R. (2021)

30 LORING, M.T., BOLDEN-HINES, T.A. Pet abuse by batterers as a means of coercing battered women into committing illegal behavior in Journal of Emotional Abuse 4/1 (2004) 27-37. DOI:10.1300/J135v04n01_02

31 Op. cit. NEWBERRY, M. (2017)

32 FITZGERALD, A.J. "They gave me a reason to live": The protective effects of companion animals on the suicidality of abused women in Humanity & Society 31/3 (2007) 355-378. DOI:10.1177/016059760703100405

has also shown that companion animals offer a non-threatening and important source of comfort to abused women and children"[33].

Anglo-Saxon and European studies on the coexistence of IPV and animal abuse have focused on quantitative research on violence rates and statistical relationships[34]. Most of this research[35] has used data accessed from female IPV victims, but includes also studies with data sourced from offenders, social workers, shelter staff, veterinarians, police reports and judicial records[36]. Although less numerous, we also find qualitative studies that provide insights on abused women's bonds with animals, reactions to animal abuse and perceptions of support programs[37]. Taken together, the findings from this research with different methodologies suggest that questions on animal maltreatment should be included in IPV intake instruments and risk assessment and that more intersectoral collaboration is necessary[38]. Authors focused on animal maltreatment in the context of family violence similarly underscore the importance of a transdisciplinary or One Health approach to confront this problem[39].

Strategies that aim to address IPV and coexisting animal abuse should consider the victims' interpretations[40]. Qualitative research can make essential contributions by helping us grasp explicit or implicit motives, impacts, perceptions of danger and of support options, as experienced by the victims, with insight also into their concrete

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33 TAYLOR, N. Criminology and Human-Animal Violence Research: The contribution and the challenge in Critical Criminology 19/3 (2011) 251-263. DOI:10.1007/s10612-010-9124-6

34 Op. cit. CLEARY, M., THAPA, D.K., WEST, S., WESTMAN, M., KORNHABER, R. (2021)

35 CAMPBELL, A.M, THOMPSON, S.L., HARRIS, T.L., WIEHE, S.E. Intimate partner violence and pet abuse: Responding law enforcement officers' observations and victim reports from the scene in Journal of Interpersonal Violence 36/5-6 (2018). DOI:10.1177/0886260518759653

36 FEBRES, J., BRASFIELD, H., SHOREY, R.C., ELMQUIST, J., NINNEMANN, A., SCHONBRUN, Y.C., TEMPLE, J.R., RECUPERO, P.R. STUART, G.L. Adulthood animal abuse among men arrested for domestic violence in Violence Against Women 20/9 (2014) 105-107. DOI:10.1177/1077801214549641

37 Op. cit. FLYNN, C.P. (2000)
HARDESTY, J.L, KHAW, L., RIDGWAY, M.D., WEBER, C., MILES, T. Coercive Control and Abused Women's Decisions about Their Pets When Seeking Shelter in Journal of Interpersonal Violence 28/13 (2013) 2617-2639. DOI: 10.1177/0886260513487994
Op. cit. NEWBERRY, M. (2017)

38 PULS, L. Pet abuse, interpersonal violence, and victim services: Annotated bibliography in Center for Victim Research (2020). In: http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11990/2037

39 JEGATHEESAN, B., ENDERS.SLEGERS, M.J., ORMEROD, E., BOYDEN, P. Understanding the link between animal cruelty and family violence: the bioecological systems model in International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health 17/9 (2020) 3116. DOI:10.3390/ijerph17093116
TARAZONA, A.M., CEBALLOS, M.C., BROOM, D.M. Human relationships with domestic and other animals: one health, one welfare, one biology in Animals 10/1 (2020) 43. DOI: 10.3390/ani10010043

40 Op. cit. NEWBERRY, M. (2017)

situational and socio-cultural context. Differences in attitudes towards IPV against women and cross-national variability found in studies on IPV[41] suggest that context and cultural norms can be important considerations. Furthermore, IPV victimization can be contingent on social dynamics and institutional settings[42]. Although less information is available on the relationships between animal abuse and socio-cultural environment, one study suggests that national culture that diminishes the status of animals can lead to more people engaging in animal maltreatment[43] and FITZGERALD, KALOF & DIETZ[44] documented a link between institutionalized violence against animals and increased violent crime rates. Research with data from ethnic minorities in the United States suggests that cultural background may influence the relationship between animal abuse and IPV[45]. However, few studies on human-animal violence have focused on the social and structural context[46]. We also find calls in the literature for studies on this topic that focus on South America[47]. This is important, as results obtained in Anglo-Saxon studies might not be directly transposed to countries with other cultures and socioeconomic profiles.

In contexts with concomitant IPV and animal abuse, women and animals are both victims of harm[48] and the reciprocal concept of the HAB implies that both may also act agentically[49] and influence victimization experiences. In this respect, the contributions

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41 GARCÍA-MORENO, C., JANSEN, H.A., ELISBERG, M., HEISE, L., WATTS, C.H. Prevalence of intimate partner violence: findings from the WHO multi-country study on women's health and domestic violence in Lancet 368/9543 (2006) 1260-1269. DOI:10.1016/S0140-6736(06)69523-8
TRAN, T.C., NGUYEN, H., FISHER, J. Attitudes towards Intimate Partner Violence against Women among Women and Men in 39 Low — and Middle — Income Countries in PloS ONE 11/11 (2016). DOI: 10.1371/journal.pone.0167438

42 MARCHBANK, J., LETHERBY, G. Introduction to gender: Social Science Perspectives (London 2014).

43 PLANT, M., VAN SCHAIK, P., GULLONE, E., FLYNN, C. "It's a Dog's Life": Culture, Empathy, Gender, and Domestic Violence Predict Animal Abuse in Adolescents—Implications for Societal Health in Journal of Interpersonal Violence 34/10 (2016) 2110-2137. DOI:10.1177/0886260516659655

44 FITZGERALD, A.J., KALOF, L., DIETZ, T. Slaughterhouses and increased crime rates: an empirical analysis of the spillover from "the jungle" into the surrounding community in Organization and Environment 22/2 (2009) 158-184. DOI:10.1177/1086026609338164

45 Op. cit. HARTMAN, C.A., HAGEMAN, T., WILLIAMS, J.H., ASCIONE, F.R (2018)

46 Op. cit. PLANT, M., VAN SCHAIK, P., GULLONE, E., FLYNN, C. (2016)
Op. cit. TAYLOR, N. (2011)

47 MONSALVE, S., FERREIRA, F., GARCÍA, R. The connection between animal abuse and interpersonal violence: A review from the veterinary perspective in Research in Veterinary Science 114 (2017) 18-26. DOI: 10.1016/j.rvsc.2017.02.025

48 Op. cit. BERNUZ, M.J. (2015)
FRASER, H., TAYLOR, N. Animals as domestic violence victims in BOZALEK, B., PEASE, B. Post-Anthropocentric Social Work: Critical Posthuman and New Materialist Perspectives (London 2021)

49 TAYLOR, N., FRASER, H. Companion animals and domestic violence: Rescuing me, rescuing you (Berlin 2019)

of green and narrative victimologies[50] can help us rethink some of the research findings on violence towards women and animals. Green victimology focuses on environmental harm and non-human victims, both at the level of ecosystems and individual animals. Close to green victimology, feminist critical animal studies have also highlighted intersecting oppressions of women and animals[51]. Narrative victimology focuses on victims' perceptions and experiences, in their own voices or through others' voices. To allow for a critical exploration that does not "overlook the lived realities of victims' experiences"[52], a narrative victimology seeks to understand those stories within the family, criminal and social context and views agency and structure as playing an interactive role, drawing on key concepts from structuration theory[53]. The narrative victimological approach can "complement the agentic with the communal, the mechanistic with the contextual, and the act of speaking with the challenges of receiving"[54]. This approach considers the experience as situated and as encountered by victims embedded in the wider socio-cultural environment is particularly suited to the study of the aftermath of primary victimization[55], including the interaction with law enforcement and the justice system. This perspective can be reckoned within the theoretical paradigm of general narrative criminology centered on harm, resistance and "collective participation in patterns of harm"[56].

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50 COOK, E.A., WALKLATE, S. Excavating victim stories: Making sense of agency, suffering and redemption, in COOK, E.A., WALKLATE, S., FLEETWOOD, J., PRESSER, L., SANDBERG, S., UGELVIT, T. The Emerald Handbook of Narrative Criminology (Bingley 2019) 239-257. DOI:10.1108/978-1-78769-005-920191023
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51 ADAMS, C., DONOVAN, J. Animals and Women: Feminist Theoretical Explorations (North Carolina 1995)
BIRKE, L. Unnamed others: How can thinking about "animals" matter to feminist theorizing? In NORA-Nordic Journal of Feminist and Gender Research 20/2 (2012) 148-157. DOI:10.1080/08038740.2012.674059
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VARONA, G. Victimidad y violencia medioambiental. Retos de la Victimología verde (Granada 2020)
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52 Op. cit. COOK, E.A. WALKLATE, S. (2019).

53 GIDDENS, A. The Constitution of Society (Cambridge 1984)

54 PEMBERTON, A., MULDER, E., AARTEN, P.G. Stories of injustice: Towards a narrative victimology in European Journal of Criminology 16/4 (2019) 391-412. DOI:10.1177/1477370818770843

55 Ibidem.

56 PRESSER, L., SANDBERG, S. Narrative Criminology as Critical Criminology in Critical Criminology 27 (2019) 131-143. DOI:10.1007/s10612-019-09437-9

3. CURRENT STUDY

The current study concludes a three-part research project on partner violence towards women and animals, conducted by CoPPA[57] in the province of Guayas[58]. In a prior quantitative study[59] for this project, a structured survey of 220 women in Guayaquil, recruited from a women's support center (*n*=101) and the wider community (*n*=119), revealed that 62% of the respondents[60] who had experienced IPV within the last 12 months indicated animal abuse by the same aggressor (*n* = 88/141). Further analysis found that animal abuse was significantly associated with IPV and, also, with fear for one's own life due to the violent partner.

For the purposes of the present qualitative study, intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to women's experiences of psychological, physical, sexual, and economic abuse by a male intimate partner (current or former) and animal maltreatment by partner (AMP) refers to non-accidental acts of physical, emotional and sexual abuse of animals, animal neglect and threats to harm or get rid of animals, as perpetrated by the intimate partner.

The main purpose of the current study is to explore the interactive dynamics and impacts of the intersection of these two types of violence, as experienced by women in Ecuador. Specifically, we aim to gain insights on: 1. The manifestations and interplay of IPV and AMP episodes, forms and violence escalation; 2. The circumstances of children's exposure to AMP in these contexts with IPV; 3. How AMP may operate to increase abuser's control over women, and the HAB's influence on these dynamics, and 4. Lived informal and formal responses to the violence and to women's help-seeking behaviors.

We conducted interviews with 11 women in Guayaquil. Hybrid thematic analysis was deployed to interpret the narratives, thought as socio-biographies. Our analysis departs from the restricted positivist paradigm and seeks to take into account the socio-cultural and institutional contexts where victimization occurs[61]and considers that "what happens subsequently becomes an integral part of the experience of victimization"[62] itself. This

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57 Coordinadora de Profesionales por la Prevención de Abusos (CoPPA) is a non-profit association of professionals and scholars dedicated to the prevention of interpersonal violence and the protection of vulnerable groups and their Human Rights.

58 Guayas is the most populated province of Ecuador, with a population of over 3 million. Its capital, Guayaquil, is the main national port.

59 Relaciones de pareja y convivencia con animales: violencia de pareja y maltrato animal. CoPPA, MAVP-INV/ECU 21 2018. Report for the Government of Guayas.

60 All had pets during a recent relationship with a male (criteria for participation in the survey).

61 BJØRNHOLT, M. The social dynamics of revictimization and intimate partner violence: an embodied, gendered, institutional and life course perspective in Nordic Journal of Criminology 20/1 (2019) 90-110. DOI:10.1080/14043858.2019.1568103

62 Op. cit. PEMBERTON, A., MULDER, E., AARTEN, P.G. (2019)

study extends previous qualitative research that has explored how AMP coexists with IPV to an understudied context, specifically a developing country with social norms favoring machismo and where public spectacles of violence against animals, namely bullfighting and cockfighting, are legal and attribute status to aggressors[63]. Our research also adds to our understanding of how primary and secondary victimization unfold and affect vulnerability and resistance in these contexts and can serve to inform future policies and approaches to IPV and AMP.

Primary victimization alludes to harm as a result of the crime and secondary victimization refers to further harm due to an inadequate response by formal or informal agents in dealing with the victim after the crime has occurred.

Method

Interviewees were purposively selected from the pool of 67 support center respondents who indicated both IPV and AMP, as measured by two validated scales[64]. To help capture a diversity of experiences, we reviewed individual survey responses and considered the rates and forms of violence; demographic variables; relationship details and types of animals. Due to difficulties locating many of the potential participants, this process involved sequential reviews[65]. Eleven women were formally invited, and all opted to participate in this study.

The in-depth interviews were conducted by the same Ecuadorian feminist researcher, second author of this article. Each interview lasted around two hours and was held in a private room of the support center (from the 18th to the 20th of October 2018). The protocol of the semi-structured interviews focused on our four main topics of inquiry drawn from a basic review of the literature, detailed later in this paper as *a priori* themes. The order of the main open questions and follow-up questions was flexible, enabling the interviewer to adapt to the particularities of each interviewee. The interview also gathered information on individual characteristics and situational circumstances. Interviews were audio-recorded and literally transcribed in Spanish. Participant data was managed on principles of confidentiality and transcripts were anonymized (numerated I 1 to I 11).

Prior to the interview, all participants signed informed consent forms that explained, in simple language, the general objectives of this study, the voluntary nature of their participation and the option to withdraw at any time, along with contact details. At

63 PONCE, J.J., ÁVILA, I.D. Slaughterhouse workers, bullfighters, and cockfighters in Ecuador: paradoxical moral and affective action on non-human animals in Qualitative Research in Psychology (2024) 1-22. DOI:10.1080/14780887.2024.2322986

64 Escala de Violencia e Índice de Severidad (Valdez-Santiago et al. 2006) and Partner Treatment of Animals Scale (Fitzgerald et al., 2016).

65 Almost 60% of potential participants could no longer be located by the centre.

the conclusion of the interview, all participants received $30 and a symbolic gift in compensation for their time.

This study obtained ethical clearance from CEPAM and was conducted in line with the ethical guidelines of the University of the Basque Country[66], and in conformity with general ethical principles for social science research[67] hat establish the need to respect human dignity, privacy, and autonomy, maximize benefits and minimize harms and risks, particularly for a population already harmed (especially, avoiding risks of revictimization and secondary victimization).

Sample description

All interviewees were residents of Guayaquil, the capital of Guayas, or the surrounding area. All were Ecuadorians, except for one who was Chilean, but had resided in Ecuador for two decades. Eight women self-identified as *mestiza*, one as *afroecuatorian,* and two declared no ethnic identity. Women's ages ranged from 18 to 65 years. All had children (2-7) and had lived with young children at home during the violent relationship. Some women had had children with previous partners. At the time of the interview, several women were already young grandmothers. All but one of the participants lived in precarious or poverty conditions, with limited access to basic social, housing, health and educational services. Many also suffered exposure to community violence. Most participants had a secondary education level, three a primary level and two had attended university. Nine women were unemployed but engaged in activities or sporadic informal work that generated a meager income.

All interviewees had lived with at least one animal (mainly dogs, cats and birds, most with more than one) during the violent relationship. The duration of relationships with the abusive partner ranged from 7 to 22 years (one woman had married her abuser at the age of 11, (I 1). At the time of the interview, only one woman continued living with her abuser. All others had separated from the violent partner (in a time period from "very recently" to eight years prior to the interview, — although in this last case, stalking, death threats, and incidents of lethal AMP were ongoing). In any case, only one initiated divorce process was mentioned. Some women had a new intimate relationship at the time of the interview, with no reference to violence.

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66 CEID (Ethics Commission for Research and Teaching) Presentation. University of the Basque Country (n.d.), in https://www.ehu.eus/en/web/ceid/presentacion

67 ALLEA (European Federation of Academies of Sciences and Humanities). The European Code of Conduct for Research Integrity (2017). In: https://allea.org/code-of-conduct/
CARLING, J. Research ethics and research integrity (Oslo 2019).
EUROPEAN COMMISSION DG RTD. in Social Science and Humanities (2018) in https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/docs/2021-2027/horizon/guidance/ethics-in-social-science-and-humanities_he_en.pdf

All women with young children had needed to report the fathers for failure to pay child support and, even after reporting, faced difficulties obtaining payments. After repeat victimization and escalation to grave-risk violence, most women reported the IPV to authorities, although in one of the most severe cases (I 11), no report is mentioned. Information on the specific crimes reported was not provided, yet most women counted with assistance tickets[68] and some held restraining orders against their partners.

Analysis: integrating deductive and inductive processes

We used a hybrid approach to thematic analysis to interpret the narratives and take into account the context. Thematic analysis comes from a social phenomenological and hermeneutical perspective[69] where the focus is on how individuals interpret their subjective and inter-subjective reality within a given context. The hybrid approach integrates both initial top-down, deductive and theoretical process (through engagement with the literature) and, later, a bottom-up, inductive, data-driven process for the themes to be interpreted at the end, in relation to another research in the field. This analysis looked for a critical conversation on what it means to be a woman (in this case, mother, mostly poor, and Ecuadorian) subjected to direct violence and also exposure to animal maltreatment by a male intimate partner.

Transcripts were analyzed in Spanish[70]. In line with our analytic approach, we did not differentiate between codes and themes, as both are understood to be analytic units of meaning[71]. For the sake of more flexibility and specificity[72], we avoided qualitative analysis software. Systematization was achieved using individual sheets, notes and text processors. This allowed us to consider the nuances of each participant's individual style of speech, including those of women who faced social exclusion and had difficulties expressing themselves.

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68 *Boleta de auxilio*: document that allows a woman (or a close relation) to call for help in the event of an aggressions by the partner. The police must go to the scene and arrest the aggressor.

69 BOYATZIS, R.E. Transforming qualitative information. The thematic analysis and code development (Thousand Oaks 1998)
BRAUN, V., CLARKE, V. Using thematic analysis in psychology in Qualitative Research in Psychology 3/2 (2006) 77-101. DOI:10.1191/1478088706qp063oa

70 Transcript excerpts were translated into English by this paper's authors, who strove to accurately convey each participant's communication style and meaning (sometimes adding explanations in brackets).

71 SWAIN, J. A hybrid approach to the thematic analysis in qualitative research: Using a practical example (London 2018).

72 BASIT, T. Manual or electronic? The role of coding in qualitative data analysis in Educational Research 45/2 (2003) 143-154. DOI:10.1080/0013188032000133548

In order to respect the methodological integrity, reading and re-reading of transcripts was carried out to consider implicit or explicit units of analysis, found in the data, related to the aims of the research and the basic literature review. We followed an iterative process of analysis where different researchers independently generated themes and subsequently reviewed and refined them together in a recursive process until a consensus was reached. *A priori* themes were drawn from our four research goals and main areas of inquiry captured in our interview questions. Our four *a priori* themes were: (i) manifestation and interplay of IPV and AMP incidents, forms and violence escalation; (ii) circumstances of children's exposure to AMP in these contexts; (iii) AMP operates to intensify abusers' control over IPV victims, with the HAB playing a role in these dynamics; and (iv) inadequate responses to help-seeking behaviors prolong victimization.

After obtaining and examining participants' responses, again taking into account the general aim of the research, *a posteriori* or emerging themes were generated by both considering the recurring topics found across the narratives (beyond those initial *a priori* themes) and by finding patterns of meaning-making used by the participants themselves[73]. Three main *a posteriori* themes were identified through inductive analysis of the narratives: (i) parallels and interactions of partners' violence against women, children and animals: the phenomenology of violence in forms, time and sequence; its justification and its functions; (ii) the continuous thread of vulnerability and resistance in victimhood: who protects who and how; and (iii) harmful responses in the aftermath of primary victimization increases vulnerability. To illustrate these emerging themes, numerous fragments of the women's accounts were selected collaboratively by the research team.

4. FINDINGS

Descriptions of Partner Violence, Animal Maltreatment and Bonds with Animals

Some women had a history of prior direct and/or indirect victimization, including child abuse (I 4); sibling physical violence (I 11); IPV (I 4) and co-occurring IPV and AMP in prior relationships (I 1). Two women further indicated that a close family member had committed suicide (the mother, I 4; a child, I 8).

All participants had experienced both physical and psychological IPV involving diverse, cumulative, prolonged and escalating abuse. The IPV included, among others, insults, humiliation, intimidation, shoving, punching, severe battering, strangulation, death threats, and assaults with weapons: "It went on all the time, bad moods, shouts, insults, many times there were beatings" (I 1); **"**he threatened me with a hand gun" (I 6);

[73] CHARMAZ, K. Constructing grounded theory (Rohnert Park 2014)

"I lived seven years with him and he always battered me (…) He hit me and broke me all this, he burst my ear, he left these scars here. That night he told me he was going to kill me because he was tired of me" (I 10). Several women narrated experiences of forced isolation: "my brothers would come to see me, but he did not let them come in (…) I could not let my mum and my dad come in (…) When my mom passed away, he would not let me go to my mother's wake" (I 4)**;** "I did not leave the house if it was not with him, never (…) Now that I am separated, I keep getting lost because I don't know the city, I am over fifty years old (I 9). Some accounts exposed sexual abuse: "sometimes he raped me" (I 10)". Economic violence was mentioned as well: "each bite of food, each cent he gave me, he gave with an insult (I 1). Subjective experiences were specified: "words can hurt more than being slapped" (I 10); "It was a marriage (…) of humiliation, of violence, of 22 years of battering (…) it was a world of fear" (I 2); "after insulting me, he used to force me, he raped me, it was terrible, I was his property" (I 3).

IPV occurred mainly in common spaces at home, but also included stalking and even physical violence in public settings:

> (At the school entrance, when attempting to stop the abuser from taking their daughter, assaulted by the abuser and his brother) "no one defended me [people thought it was a contract killing[74]] (…) he punched me, then again, his brother grabbed me (…) they struck me against a post, I was left unconscious on the ground and they continued to hit me (…) I was bathed in my own blood and I still have the mark" (I 6).

All participants indicated exposure to both physical and emotional AMP. Threats to harm, kill or get rid of animals were also prevalent and some accounts described deliberate negligence. AMP went from frightening to killing animals and included[75], among others, getting rid of animals, refusing basic needs or care, burning, strangling, and beating animals to death, for example: "he kicked them, beat them" [a dog and two cats] (I 1); "he would squeeze his neck, the doggy was a baby (…) he would kick the little dog" (I 5); "he put him [a cat] in a bag and threw it in the motorway" (I 6), "he would crash them [two dogs] against the wall… he always threatened that he was going to poison them" (I 6), "The first dog he had, Jim, he would even punch him" (I 4); Descriptions of AMP also entailed forced mating (I 7), drowning the cats (I 11); killing by poisoning: "he injected him with bleach" (I 4); and deliberate confinement and abandonment: "He died practically abandoned (…) the dog lived permanently tied up (…) outside and crying all night (…) and worse, he got sick" (I 9).

Some participants mentioned partner's abuse of other animals, or events that occurred prior to, or in early stages of their relationship: "he enjoyed torturing animals

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74 This could suggest a context where witnessing social violence is common (I 6).

75 Animal sexual abuse directly involving partners or participants was not disclosed in the narratives.

that were around, he would throw them [stray animals] with his motorcycle", (I 6); "other people's cats (…) he would throw scalding water on them" (I 11).

All but one of the participants (I 4) expressed strong attachments to companion animals present in their household during the violent relationship: "they are my children too" (I 11); "he was my life" (I 1); "my pets, they are my children" (I 2) "I grew to feel love for the dog (…) the love for a dog is, I think, just like the love for a human" (I 10); "another family member" (I 5); "I love them as part of the family" (I 8). Most also highlighted the reciprocal nature of the relationship: "She was always with me, she went wherever I went, she always accompanied me, she slept inside the house, I gave her the same food that I prepared for us, I loved her very much (…) she understood everything" (I 3); "She would adopt my moods" (I 6); as well as benefits they received from this relationship: "when I'm in a hole, in some corner crying and shattered, Poppy is at my side. She gets close to me, looks at me (…) she is really incredible" (I 7). The one exception indicated that the dogs belonged to her abuser and that some were aggressive (I 4). Yet, after ending the relationship, this participant became attached to a dog that remained in her household.

Phenomenology of violence: "The same that he would do to me"

Many women perceived similarities between the AMP and their own victimization: "Just like what he would to me, he would do against the animals, exactly… It's all one and the same" (I 1); "He did not have a good character, neither for the animals, neither for me (…) in that same way he treated me" (I 10). Some participants further noted similarities between the AMP and the violence a partner directed at his own mother, for example: (99 years old, ailing in a wheelchair) "the granny was covered up to here in urine, even here in her hair. And she is his mother! In the same way he relates to the animal, he relates to his mother" (I 9). Moreover, possibly exposing the abuser's individual or preferred strategy for obtaining dominance and imposing, particular tactics and (main) forms of violence directed at the interviewee were often reflected in equivalent aggressions directed at her animals. For example, a participant subjected to extreme isolation and systematic restrictions indicated that the abuser also kept two dogs permanently confined (one lived in a bathroom, the other tethered to an outdoor pole): "I couldn't leave, couldn't go out of the house (…) because there, in that house, if you moved a chair, a table, it was with his consent (…) I could not untie him (the dog)" (I 9). Similarly, most women who experienced severe physical IPV also indicated severe physical AMP.

Several women portrayed partners as initially considerate and affectionate and then later in the relationship, almost suddenly, turning to become abusive. Analogous trajectories for the onset of the first aggressions directed at a participant and against

individual household animals were also detected. One participant recounted: (regarding her own victimization) "he seemed like an angel (…) but it was fake, once he had everything he wanted, he showed what he was really like"; and (regarding the abuse of two dogs) "according to him he needed something to entertain himself, he cuddled them, he got them used to going to bed with him (…) then, just one week later, his conduct towards them became terrible. One day he took the little female, picked her up and with one kick sent her flying (...) something inside her burst (…) she died… the male died too" (I 1). Moreover, in many cases, we can observe the cycle of violence for IPV[76] in analogous alternating patterns of AMP: "When he was in a temper, he kicked them, threw them, then he showed them affection, took them, caressed them (…) He would tell them 'forgive me, I sometimes am in a bad mood and treat you badly (…) The same that he would do to me" (I 1), "later when his anger had passed, he would take the dog and cuddle him as if he loved him" (I 5); "He would be tranquil for 15 days, then go back to the same thing, insulting, offending, humiliating, and also beating the animals with belts" (I 2). Sometimes abusers showed contradictory and alternating attitudes towards specific animals: "one day he found out he [the dog] had been run over, he started to cry, even though he had maltreated him so much" (I 5). These cycles of alternating conducts and attitudes often resulted in confusion that obfuscated the gravity of both types of violence: "when he is working, he is affectionate" (I 11) "I think he has a split personality" (I 5); "he has always been violent with his dogs, but they were his own dogs, but, at the same time, he loved them" (I 4).

Most participants reported revictimization that included frequent episodes, cumulative forms of violence and increasing severity of IPV and AMP, ultimately culminating in grave risk situations. Incidents of AMP often immediately preceded or followed IPV incidents, and both types of violence sometimes occurred in combination. Many described that the care of the companion animal (the attention devoted, the food, the place for sleeping) would trigger violent conflicts. Incidents of one type of violence often precipitated the other: "he would kick him and then have conflicts with me" (I 6). Moreover, IPV and AMP, not only occurred simultaneously (for example: "Whenever we had a fight (…) in one of these fights the dog was left lame" I 5), but, as we will describe, often interacted to intensify the repercussions of the violence.

Some partners were violent with their own mothers: "he would fight with his mother, insult her, tell her to give him money" (I 5), and several maltreated their mother's animals: "the lady would shout 'not my dogs'! And he would hit the dogs" (I 9); "he killed his mother's cat", (I 1).

Most narratives further divulge incidents of physical and psychological child abuse by partner, as well as incidents of IPV and AMP in the presence of children, for example:

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[76] WALKER, L. The Battered Woman (New York 1979)

"he hit my girl, he beat her in a terrible way" (I 7); "he would hit her, insult her, he was very active, very jealous, controlling, didn't let her have a girlfriend" (I 1); "he took a knife, whenever he attacked me he always did it in front of the girls" (I 6); "one would cry, the other scream, the other insult, because they loved their animals (I 2)". Accounts revealed multiple threats to harm or remove animals directed at children: "he would tell them [two girls] "if you continue to keep the dogs, I will take and drown them" (1 4); "he told him he was going to throw him out on the street. My son would become desperate because he had grown fond of that dog" (I 9).

Children were exposed to AMP, often during IPV episodes, sometimes as part of their own victimization, and sometimes when their mother was not at home:

> "My children used to tell me that when I was not at home and they had to bathe the dogs, he used to say that he would do it, but that he hit them and pushed their heads under water" (I 6).

Some aggressors also deliberately exposed other children to violent scenes: "when the dog finally died and he opened it in half, he summoned his nephew, an eleven-year-old kid... saw it through the window and was traumatized" (I 4). One participant indicated that her eldest daughter had started to maltreat their dog: "What children see, children do (…) they will say this is normal and they will do the same (…) she summons him 'Oh my love', pets him and soon after "PAG!" she hits him and the dog cries" (I 4).

Justifications of the Violence: "Covering the sun with a finger"

All participants had found some way to minimize abuser's responsibility or even to justify his violence against them and their animals, at least initially. Similar justifications for the violent behavior were often articulated and reinforced by the abuser, family members and others. These justifications hindered women's resistance to the aggressions and contributed towards perpetuating their victimization. Four main justifications can be found in the interviews:

First, partner's violent behaviors were perceived as having been shaped or conditioned by childhood exposure to domestic violence and/or direct experiences of child abuse. Thus, the abuser's responsibility was minimized as the partners were thought to have involuntarily internalized violence as normal behavior within an intimate relationship: "in his family home there was a lot of violence too, his father was a batterer, very machista (…) I imagine he is dragging all that with him and now he is repeating that" (I 1); "Set off by the violence of his stepfather who was a slaughterer (…) who had no problem in killing animals (…) taught a model for how to behave from his stepfather who was a man …a brute... and he saw a lot of violence" (I 7)[77]. "My mother-in-law also

[77] At the same time, participant recognises that this does not justify perpetration: "I also witnessed it, but I am not a violent person. I come from a military dictatorship, I fought against it" (I 7).

suffered a lot of violence. She doesn't have a single tooth because her husband knocked them all out" (I 9). A second justification for the violent behaviors was that the partner was under the influence of some kind of drug, and therefore not really himself. Many narratives include comments that attribute the violence to alcohol or drugs: "when he was free of drugs, he was normal (…) when he is all right, he is good and healthy, he works, he is tender" (I 11). A third explanation was partner's mood or a "bad character towards the animals and towards me" (I 10); "I was hit when he did not agree with something or because he was not in a good mood" (I 7). A fourth explanation was that the violence was caused by the woman's failure to fulfill her female roles or to properly perform home tasks: "he told me I was of no use to him as a woman" (I 6); "he used to tell me that I could not even serve him as a woman, he used to say that I was his wife and I had the obligation to have sex with him" (I 3). Similarly, AMP was sometimes justified as training or a corrective response to an animal's misbehavior: "he kicked him because he peed on the stairs" (I 10); or as an unavoidable consequence of inappropriate conduct: (regarding abuser's poisoning of a mistreated dog who became aggressive) "He wanted to bite us, even though he was fed" (I 4).

Taken together, the narratives portray a broader context of extensive violence against women that both displayed and helped perpetuate a culture of machismo. Most interviewees had witnessed male violence directed at women, often within intimate relationships involving their relatives, partners' families and/or neighbors. Given the patriarchal ideologies of the society in which they live, several women and others in their social networks viewed violence as a component of many intimate relationships, within which the male is deemed to be entitled to exert power by controlling, punishing and, in some cases, forgiving and being forgiven. Many participants held the idea of femininity that denotes women should bear everything in silence for the sake of others' wellbeing or a superior end[78]. These values and beliefs were assimilated from the wider society, their families and their own mothers:

> "My mother ["a sensible woman"] still lived and also told me I had to stick with it because he was the father of my children (…) I adapted to that savage life during 22 years in which there was no one who removed that blindfold from my eyes" (I 2).

Narratives also depict a context where stray animals are ubiquitous and where witnessing animal abuse that remained unchallenged was fairly common: "In front of my house… there is a woman who hits the animals very hard, just like my husband… but I cannot say anything" (I 9). We further found a tendency to conceptualize animals based on instrumental purposes "he used to say that the cat is used for hunting, and that there is no need of caring for him or feeding him" (I 1).

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78 CAMACHO, G. Maltrato animal en el contexto de la violencia de la pareja hacia las mujeres en la provincia de Guayas [Unpublished, Report for the Government of Guayas]. CoPPA (2019).

Functions of animal abuse in the context of IPV: "This same way I will hit your owner"

In the context of the examined IPV, violence against animals was instrumentalized to gain power and exert control over women, mainly as a tactic of intimidation and punishment. AMP was also frequently described as displaced aggression, an outburst of ire or frustration that reflected the abuser's lack of self-control.

More specifically, participants provided three main motives or reasons (often in combination) for the partner's maltreatment of animals: 1) To punish, by causing emotional pain or distress: "he took revenge with the dog because he knew that this would hurt us, that we loved the dog", I 5; "He would always threaten us with throwing them away, it was a way to punish me or the girls, because we were very attached to the animals", I 6; "When he hurts Poppy he knows that this will hurt me profoundly, so I think that this is a way to get to me and break me to pieces", I 7. "I had a parakeet named Pan, he spoke, whistled, he was my life. (…) He took him away (…) that is, he hurt me and he hurt the animal too", 1 I; 2) To intimidate so as to obtain compliance: "He told me that he was going to take the dog, he would repeat this often because he knew that all of us, including my other children from my first relationship, were attached to the dog (...) it was his way of blackmailing us" I 5; "he had a restraining order (…) but, then, and it was no coincidence, my animals started appearing dead [displayed on her doorstep] Ola, Tin, Nat… he killed them, the six dogs (…) He does this to intimidate me, so that I will be afraid and come back to him", I 8; "I saw him hit my dog and heard him say: 'that's how I'm going to hit your owner' (…) he told me, just like Chani is prostrate with her paws wounded like that, that's how he wanted to see me, I understood that he was threatening me" (I 3); "he would tell me 'get up earlier in the morning to clean, if not you will throw this dog out'" (I 10)*;* and 3) Uncontrolled outbursts of displaced ire (often expressed as "Venting ire"): "when he was in a bad mood, he kicked them, beat them. There was no control in him (…) if for whatever reason he came across the animal, he would take it out on him" (1 I). Other motives mentioned less frequently included: to punish animals for unwanted behaviors (I 4) or for sadistic pleasure (I 6).

AMP was often instrumentalized to monopolize attention. Jealousy was often involved in these dynamics: "because you love the dog more" (I 3); "he said that we treated the dog as more important, shouting: "son of a bitch, I am going to grab him and kill him right now" (I 5).

Similar motives were attributed to the AMP involving children and abuser's own mothers: "The same thing would happen at his mom's place, because he had problems with her regarding some money, he would take it with the dog, kicking the dog so that his mom would feel bad" (I 5). Some narratives described incidents that combined different types of violence, victims and motives for the AMP:

> "Because the baby did not want to eat, he took a carving knife and threatened my daughter, then he started shouting that he was going to leave, he took and kicked the dog, sent him flying, the dog was screaming and we were crying because the dog suffered (…) My daughter cried and shouted: "No, my doggy no!" (I 5).

Participants' subjective experience of AMP was revealed: "It hurt me, it hurt me a lot I cried a lot, seeing that [*crying*] that is something hard, right? It is a very tough memory." (I 1); "I was afraid that he was capable of doing the same to me too" (I 3); "The animal cried in a corner, this broke my heart" (I 2); "So then, I became afraid of him" (I 9); "it made me suffer so much (…) I didn't want him to suffer so much [*cries*]" (I 3)[79].

Thus, in those cases where animal abuse was a tactic to control participants, women were the intended targets of the violence; while in those cases of AMP described as venting ire, the abuser had no calculated target. However, in both cases, the AMP caused participants emotional pain, instilled a state of fear, constant vigilance and further submissiveness: "I paid heed to everything he said and would keep the dog locked away in the toys room so that he [the partner] would be calm and not maltreat him" (I 5). Furthermore, displays of grave violence against animals, killing them, served to establish that the abuser could use extreme violence; that stated or implicit threats to kill the participant could actually be carried out (an effective tactic, even in the absence of bonds with animals).

The AMP functioned or operated as a potent and integrated component of the IPV to affect participants' decisions and behaviors, driven by the women's efforts to: spare animals from suffering further pain or graver consequences; avoid losing the relationship with a cherished animal; deter escalation of the violence to themselves or their children and/or prevent that the extreme violence employed on an animal would be used also against them.

"Life was no longer a life". The continuous thread of vulnerability and resistance in victimhood in terms of intersubjectivity: who protects who and how

Most women recounted that they needed time to realize, after severe victimization, the subordinated role assigned to them by society, their families and their own conceptions when, initially, IPV was viewed not as a social problem, nor a crime to be reported, but something personal that should be hidden and induce shame: "These things I have kept

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[79] Of note, regarding perpetrator's intentionality, the sole participant who was not attached to any animal during the violent relationship (I 4), indicated that threats to get rid of animals were directed at her daughters (who had close bonds with the dogs), but not at her: "he knew that with me he couldn't do this game with the dogs. With me what he would do is say that he was going to take the girls away" (I 4).

to myself, I did not tell my brothers because these are things that make me ashamed" (I 4). Another woman said: "He battered me, hit me and shouted at me. I would tell him: 'don't shout', I did not want to be overheard by other people." (I 9)

Due to the power imbalance, structural inequalities and the habitual context of opacity, where an aggressor might perceive the lack of external controls as favoring his opportunity to be violent, although the women, as victims of IPV, can be considered vulnerable victims[80], this vulnerability should not be viewed as intrinsic or solely personal. We find the same vulnerability intertwined within dynamics of intergenerational resistance: "If you hit me, I will report you', my daughter used to tell him" (I 1). Women's narratives show that despite the fear and the suffering, participants found a way to cope: "amidst that life of torment, anxiety and violence, I sustained myself with my love towards my children and my little animals" (I 2); "when my mother died, I said to myself, now she is not going to suffer (if I end the relationship), and I swear that this gave me strength, an infinite courage" (I 4). Referring to her daughter, one woman stated: "she separated, had a child, became a single mother. She said she was not going to tolerate her husband hitting her" (I 10). This attitude gives the interviewee hope that her daughter will not relive the victimization she herself suffered.

Resilience started with the awareness of victimization: "I always wanted to cover the sun with a finger" (I 10); "what I was doing with my life and with my children's lives was a life full of sadness, full of lies" (I 2). Some children urged their mothers to leave: "Mummy, let's get out of here with the doggy" (I 5), but others implored: "mummy don't report" (I 4). However, the everyday life of most participants was marked by fear of reprisals. Vigilance and a sense of powerlessness shaped many of their decisions. Despite feeling helpless, the women had tried to adapt to their violent partner so that they, their children and their animals could survive: "I feared him more and more because I had already realized he was capable of doing anything, he did not care, he could not control himself. I felt fear for myself and for my children" (I 3); "I have had to keep silent, accommodate things in such a way as to avoid that the dog end up harmed" (I 7).

Narratives reveal that, within these contexts with IPV, the HAB played a multifaceted role in the dynamics of vulnerability, resilience and resistance to violence. Bonds often underpinned the co-occurring violence and intensified the victim's vulnerability, yet these reciprocal attachments also brought about protective effects and responses.

Women's close relationships and interactions with animals precipitated violent incidents: "I went to the store to fetch a carton for the cats and their mother. When I got back, (…) in the corridor there was one cat, drowned (I 11). Attachments to animals could make participants more hesitant to leave their violent partners (due to

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[80] LOMBARDO, E., ROLANDSEN, L. Intersectionality in European Union policymaking: the case of gender-based violence in Politics 36/4 (2016) 364-373. DOI:10.1177/0263395716635184

a reluctance to separate from their animal and/or fears of what abusers might do to animals left behind): "he will not let me take Poppy (…) I cannot leave her behind" (I 7). In addition, as previously indicated, these attachments meant that animals could be used (and harmed) to control and hurt participants and their children.

On the other hand, animals were also implicated observers of the IPV episodes, often providing protection. Many women recounted that their dogs had attempted to defend them from the partner's aggressions by barking, growling and sometimes even attacking: "he tried to strangle me, then the animal came to help me, he almost tore his [the abuser's] back apart, scratching him and biting him (…) he saved me" (I 2); "whenever he was aggressive with me, the little dogs wanted to defend me" (I 6); "when he shouted at me, the dogs defended me, they went against him (…) they stood between us" (I 11). Women and children also tried to protect the animals: "I would feed him in secret (…) I didn't let him be hit if I was around, no, then I would tell him to hit me (I 10); "My daughters took care the dogs, put them under the bed so that they would not go out and their dad could not see them and hit them" (I 6).

Nevertheless, the reciprocal defense often made the abuser more violent: "he used to tell us he wanted us dead, to all of us, me, the children, the animals (…) he began to maltreat them because he was starting to see that they defended me" (I 2). Not all animals took a defensive stance when the women were attacked: "when they heard a conflict, they ran away" (I 1); and most, even those that intervened, developed fearful conducts "the dogs were afraid of him" (I 6), or depression (I 3). Some animals suffered grave consequences for intervening: "the male dog defended me when he tried to hit me, but he kicked him and then suddenly, one day, the dog died" (I 6); with negative repercussions also for the women: "The death of the male dog hurt me more, because I knew the reason" (I 6).

When the AMP became severe, some participants protected their animals by placing them in other homes: "I had to come to the point of having to give my dog away [*cries*] I had to give her away, and why? because with so much abuse he was going to end up killing her!" (I 3).

Furthermore, the violence escalated and became particularly dangerous when participants took the decision to report the IPV or terminate the relationship: "I did not want anything from him; he told me he was going to set my house on fire with me and my daughters inside" (I 8). Previously, escalation to grave IPV and AMP had been progressing in cycling patterns of violence[81], that included aggressor's confusing messages that served to manipulate and keep victims in the relationship: "I used to go to my mothers' house and in fifteen minutes there he was outside, like a pilgrim, crying, kneeling, saying 'forgive me, I ask you, I cannot live without you" (I 2); "It

[81] Op. cit. WALKER, L. (1979)

won't happen again" (I 1); "he apologized: 'please, I don't remember what I did'" (I 7). Thus, the partner is, at once, someone to be feared and someone to be forgiven; yet that forgiveness is conditioned by continuous violence.

Beyond reciprocal protection, there was also affectionate companionship and reciprocal empathy. Animals provided emotional support, especially after episodes of IPV: "When I was crying, the doggy came to me and groomed my legs as if to comfort me" (I 5); as well as social companionship that diminished isolation: "this little cat has been keeping me company for a long time" (I 1); "I stay with them, speak to them, we play around together" (I 8); important also for their children: "she told me that Lobo had been her sole companion" (I 10). Animals were an affectionate safe haven for participants: "they are little animals that are there, taking care of us" (I 2). Interviewees expressed their sadness over their animals' suffering and that the animals empathized with their sorrow, fear and helplessness:

> "I had a good communication with them [two dogs] (…) they always paid attention to me, they cared about me when my husband wanted to hit me, they defended me, because of that they adopted the same depression I went through… the female dog suffered like my daughters did when they saw me like that." (I 6)

Women and children who had bonds with animals suffered more emotional distress from the exposure to AMP, tried to protect the animals, and, at the same time, when subjected to IPV incidents, turned to the animals for comfort: "my daughter looked for Poppy in moments when she felt vulnerable or in a violent situation, she would seek her out to feel protected, to find refuge" (I 7).

The HAB is key to understanding many interactive aspects of the women's vulnerability and resistance:

> "For me he is like a human being, he's only unable to speak, they are kind, they can even understand what is going on. I cried with my daughters because of the little dog. When he was violent towards the animal, I used to quarrel with him and tell him (…) "when you hurt him you do the same to the girls" (I 5).
>
> "It hurt me. I told my daughter: "While that bastard is here, it's best we don't bring animals because they are going to suffer, they are going to die (…) save the animal and save yourself because you are being battered for defending the animal" (I 1).

In light of the increase in the dangerousness of the IPV and the realization that their partners were not going to change, the women found the fortitude to confront their situation and took the decision to seek help and report the aggressor. In their words: "I said enough, I am not going to keep sacrificing my life, bearing a bad life for me and my children" (I 3); "he had problems with me, he consumed at home, he mistreated the dog, my daughter with a knife (…) because of all that, I said this has gone too far. I left with nothing" (I 5); "you go against my children, you go against the animals, or we kill each other, or I end up killed, but I will not allow this" (I 2); "my daughter, at that time

14 years-old, told me 'Mummy, either for you or for us, but press that phone button!' I did and the police came" (I 7). When finally ending the relationship, participants took care of their surviving animals: "The doggy came with us, I was not going to leave him with him, imagine what he would have done to him!" (I 5).

Some women recounted the difficulties they faced after reporting and separation, in particular further impoverishment of their households and, for some, continued attacks and threats by ex-partners. Nevertheless, participants also showed resilience and even some degree of post-traumatic growth, including pride in having been able to construct a new environment of emotional wellbeing for themselves, their children and their animals: "I am not totally cured from what I lived during seven years, but I finally have some peace" (I 10); (…) now I feel calm, very happy to live a new life" (I 2).

Some participants indicated that it had taken them time to locate new living arrangements where they could keep their animals. One noted that abused women might postpone leaving their partners because shelters don't allow animals: "There should be more programs that accept also a dog, a little cat that these women might have, because they are part of them, they are like their children" (I 2).

"I felt so helpless when I heard the policeman": Responses and vulnerability

After prolonged victimization and subjection to increasingly dangerous violence, by the time of the interview, all but one of the participants had managed to break out of their isolation, and the physical and emotional chains that had kept them trapped in the violent relationship. However, participants had to struggle with economic problems and long-term psychological effects of the violence: "I want psychological treatment because sometimes I am feeling low, rude, I feel desperate because I have no job. How am I going to feed my children?" (I 11); "from so much abuse, I became off-balanced" (I 1); "I still have vestiges in my head, sad moments, moments of great difficulties and I keep fighting (…) Imagine, alone with my four children" (I 4). Some women also indicated impacts on their physical health: "That sea of crying for so many years has already had consequences on my health. Now it appears that I must go to the cardiologist again" (I 2).

Moreover, the violence also had adverse effects on their children, which meant additional impacts and repercussions that made it more difficult for participants to achieve their own wellbeing and that of their families. Children's emotional and behavioral problems are revealed in the accounts: "I took my daughter with me because we were going through a very bad time, with the death of her brother [suicide] the death of the dog [killed by partner], the problems with her father, she wanted to commit suicide" (I 8); "With the court hearing (…), my youngest daughter

started with fever, bad stomach, the mouth full of sores (…) did not want to talk, and I recalled how some years ago she was like that when she saw that her dad hit me" (I 6). Another woman was worried because her daughter was maltreating their dog: "this is a trauma that stays in children, and thinking this is something normal" (I 4). One participant disclosed that she feared for her daughter, now living with a man who was maltreating her dog (I 9).

In the processes of seeking help or protection from further primary victimization, participants encountered secondary victimization. Stopping primary victimization and recovering from it became more difficult for those who experienced secondary victimization, caused by the lack of family, social and institutional support.

Women's families sometimes blamed them for the IPV, did nothing against it ("It's your problem", I 8) or justified it somehow: "she told me I had to put up with my husband" (I 2). Several women described inadequate or harmful responses when they approached authorities to report the IPV, including difficulties obtaining information, failures to acknowledge the gravity of the violence, and failures to deliver accountability for the injustice of the harm. These deficient responses left them feeling helpless, exacerbated their sense of disempowerment, interfered with their recuperation and created barriers towards achieving personal wellbeing and finding a new purpose for their lives[82]. The failure to provide protection also left participants exposed to further primary victimization, in particular as some continued suffering serious aggressions from ex-partners.

Regarding their interactions with police and the court system, most women were very critical:

> "I felt so helpless when I heard the policeman tell him "Don't worry we will back to you, you won't be jailed for hitting her, you haven't even done that much to her" (…) why did it take them so long, why was he not accused of attempted feminicide? He was accused of intrafamily violence because we had quarreled (…) I wanted to call my lawyer, but they would not let me" (I 6)
>
> "I was taken to report. Soon, all his family arrived (…) I felt alone, totally alone, when I saw that the policemen were chatting with him [the partner] (…) and the policeman said to me: "Listen, he has a good job," and I told him: "What, excuse me, because I don't have a job, I' m not worth anything?!" (…) "Well, I am going to report him! I was upset with the attitude of the two male police officers" (I 10).
>
> "Unfortunately, Ecuador's reality… is that until the woman is missing and arm or is covered in blood, justice is not done. He got out in 10 days, paid the fine and got out. Obviously, they had seen all my bruises and everything… but it was not enough" (I 2).

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82 ZEHR, H. Journey to belonging, in WEITEKAMP, E., KERNER, H. J. Restorative justice: Theoretical foundations (London 2002) 21-31.

And, even with a restraining order: "when the police would arrive, he was already gone" (I 8); "there were only men there: the prosecutor, the judge, the two policemen who detained him, his friend who has many powerful contacts (…) the judge says that there is a legal vacuum (…) the only thing that the judge did was get him out of the house" (I 7).

In another case, the sole woman to report the AMP to authorities stated:

> "I told them that my ex-partner, my daughter's father was threatening to kill me (…) I also explained that he had killed my animals. And they replied: 'here we don't accept those kinds of reports of animal maltreatment. This place is for women' (…) as the police didn't do anything, I came to the Center." (I 8)

Secondary victimization through social minimization of the gravity of AMP and devaluation of participant's grief over the loss of an animal was also evident in the narratives: "I cried a lot, but people said 'Ah, It's just a dog!' It's not as if he had killed your child" (I 6). No attempt was ever made by authorities or institutions to protect their animals. Support service personnel also failed to grasp the significance of AMP. Traumatic exposure to AMP was not discussed: "I only spoke about the violence against us, because unfortunately many human beings do not realize the importance of pets" (I 6). All women expressed that neither police nor support personnel had ever asked them about their partner's violence against animals, nor on how exposure to AMP may have affected them or their children ("they did not care about this", I 2).

5. DISCUSSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study extends our understanding of how women experience concomitant IPV and AMP to a South American city and a *machista* sociocultural context with widespread normalization of violence against women, as well as against animals. The study also sought to shed light on how primary and secondary victimization occur and influence resilience, vulnerability and resistance in these contexts, as well as on role of the HAB in these dynamics.

With respect to our main topics of inquiry, we found that AMP interacted and operated in concert with IPV to intensify fear, emotional distress and abuser's control over participants, and, to a great extent, was influenced by the HAB. Children often witnessed the AMP as bystanders but were also deliberately exposed to the AMP. Moreover, we find similar manifestations of violence against women, children and animals in forms, sequence and times of the aggressions. This violence was often minimized or justified by aggressors, family and others, and, at least at first, by some of the victims themselves. Secondary victimization was encountered across institutions. Failures to recognize and respond to the gravity of the violence increased victims' vulnerability, and served as barriers to protection, resistance and justice.

Violent behaviors towards women and companion animals present similar cycles, often occurred simultaneously or in quick succession, combined diverse forms of violence, and escalated in tandem over time. The abuser's reliance on analogous forms of abuse and the parallel escalation of both types of violence may reflect some of the statistical relationships found between forms and severity of IPV and AMP in certain quantitative studies[83]. Coinciding with prior findings regarding the motivators for animal abuse[84], participants described that their partners used animal abuse as an instrument to intimidate and punish participants, in order to obtain their compliance. Displaced ire ("Venting"), attributed to partners' lack of behavioral controls, was also mentioned as a reason for the AMP. Both the instrumental AMP and uncontrolled AMP provoked considerable emotional pain and fear, kept participants in a state of constant vigilance, elicited placating strategies and consolidated compliance with abuser's demands. In line with ASCIONE et al.[85] and MCDONALD et al.[86], children were directly exposed to AMP and sometimes tried to intervene. Findings of co-occurring AMP, child maltreatment and physical and/or psychological the aggressors' mothers are consistent with linked literature that suggests a nexus between animal abuse, domestic violence, elder abuse and child abuse[87]. Some narratives captured episodes of violence

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83 Op. cit. BARRETT, B.J., FITZGERALD, A., STEVENSON, R., CHEUNG, C.H. (2020)
Op. cit. ASCIONE, F.R., WEBER, C.V., THOMPSON, T.M., HEATH, J., MARUYAMA, M., HAYASHI, K. (2007)

84 COLLINS, E.A., CODY, A.M., MCDONALD, S.E., NICOTERA, N., ASCIONE, F.R., WILLIAMS, J.H. A template analysis of intimate partner violence survivors' experiences of animal maltreatment: Implications for safety planning and intervention in Violence Against Women 24/4 (2018) 452-476. DOI:10.1177/1077801217697266
Op. cit. FITZGERALD, A.J., BARRETT, B.J., STEVENSON, R., CHEUNG, C.H. (2019)
HARDESTY, J.L, KHAW, L., RIDGWAY, M.D., WEBER, C., MILES, T. Coercive Control and Abused Women's Decisions about Their Pets When Seeking Shelter in Journal of Interpersonal Violence 28/13 (2013) 2617-2639. DOI: 10.1177/0886260513487994
ROGUSKI, M. Pets as pawns: The co-existence of animal cruelty and family violence. Royal New Zealand Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and The National Collective of Independent Women's Refuges (2012). In: https://nationallinkcoalition.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/DV-PetsAsPawnsNZ.pdf

85 Op. cit. ASCIONE, F.R., WEBER, C.V., THOMPSON, T.M., HEATH, J., MARUYAMA, M., HAYASHI, K. (2007)

86 MCDONALD, S.E., COLLINS, E.A., MATERNICK, A., NICOTERA, N., GRAHAM-NERMANN, S., ASCIONE, F.R., WILLIAMS, J.H. Intimate partner violence survivors' reports of their children's exposure to companion animal maltreatment: A qualitative study in Journal of Interpersonal Violence 34/13 (2019) 2627-2652. DOI:10.1177/0886260516689775

87 ARKOW, P. A Link Across the Lifespan: Animal abuse as a marker for traumatic experiences in child abuse, domestic violence and elder abuse (2015), in http://hdl.handle.net/20.500.11990/826
Op. cit. JEGATHEESAN, B., ENDERS.SLEGERS, M.J., ORMEROD, E., BOYDEN, P. (2020)
VINCENT, A., MCDONALD, S., POE, B., DEISNER, V. The link between interpersonal violence and animal abuse in Society Register 3/3 (2019) 83-101. DOI:10.14746/sr.2019.3.3.05

victimization and/or perpetration across generations, suggesting the intergenerational transmission of violence documented in several IPV studies[88].

Coinciding with the literature on this topic[89], bonds with animals could both protect and endanger the IPV victims. Interviewees indicated strong attachments to companion animals, viewed as family members and a vital source of social and emotional support, especially in moments of crisis. Yet, bonds sometimes triggered violence, increased distress over animal abuse and created obstacles to leaving the abuser. We further found that companion animals (dogs, in particular) were perceived as implicated observers of the IPV and that the HAB drove agentic responses[90] by both the women and the animals that influenced the violence and the dynamics of vulnerability and resistance in these contexts. The attempts to defend or protect could prolong relationships, provoke more violence and even graver consequences, yet sometimes resulted in effective protection. In line with results from some studies[91], incidents of AMP drove some women's decisions to terminate the relationship or place animals in safer homes.

Secondary victimization occurred in participants' interactions with their social networks, police, and the justice system. Coinciding with TAPIA's observations for Ecuador, law enforcement responses were often inadequate and dismissive and failed to provide any safeguards against further aggressions[92]. Criminal court proceedings left participants feeling alone and insignificant, had adverse effects on their children, and rarely delivered accountability. Minor post-arrest sanctions belittled the harm and left participants exposed to retaliatory violence by abusers. In all cases and across all sectors, the animals' welfare, the animal abuse, the impact of witnessing this abuse and women's concern over their animals' safety received no attention.

The many parallels found in the dynamics of the partners' violence against the women and animals, and the victims of the aggressors' violence (including also children and their mothers), suggests a manifestation of masculine identities that are reaffirmed using strength and aggression and encourage the use of violence as a means of gaining power over others considered inferior or weaker. Similar conceptualizations of manhood,

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88 CAMACHO, G. La violencia de género contra las mujeres en el Ecuador: Análisis de los resultados de la Encuesta Nacional sobreRelaciones Familiares y Violencia de Género contra las Mujeres. Consejo Nacional para la Igualdad de Género (2014), in https://oig.cepal.org/sites/default/files/violencia_de_gnero_ecuador.pdf

89 Op. cit. CLEARY, M., THAPA, D.K., WEST, S., WESTMAN, M., KORNHABER, R. (2021)

90 TAYLOR, N., RIGGS, D.W., DONOVAN, C., SIGNAL, T., FRASER, H. People of diverse genders and/or sexualities caring for and protecting animal companions in the context of domestic violence in Violence Against Women 25/9 (2019) 1096-1115. DOI:10.1177/1077801218809942

91 Ibidem

92 TAPIA, S.T. Beyond Carcelar Expansion: Survivors' Experiences of Using Specialised Courts for Violence Against Women in Ecuador in Social & Legal Studies (2020) 1-21. DOI:10.1177/0964663920973747

bolstered by socio-cultural norms that endorse machismo[93] and the legitimization of male-focused public rituals of violence towards animals[94], could also account, at least in part, for the generalized failures to respond to the gravity of both types of violence, including legal vacuums and deficient enforcement of laws that leave women in danger[95] and preclude any protection for animals. These contextual conditions not only facilitated the aggressors' violent conducts but may have led participants themselves to take more time to recognize the injustice of their victimization. With respect to the AMP, despite their distress over the animal abuse, at the time of interview, most participants had never considered the possibility of reporting the maltreatment to authorities.

With few exceptions, previous research on the phenomenon has focused on high-income nations, often with data gathered from women residing in shelters and/or in contexts where IPV and companion animal abuse arouse greater social condemnation, reflected also in greater access to protective interventions and safety options, including more safekeeping services for the animals. In our study, despite the danger presented by ex-partners, even after reporting the IPV, most women (their location know to aggressors who remained at large) obtained little or no protective actions and scant social acknowledgement of the injustice of the harm. Although several of our findings are broadly consistent with the extant literature, results highlight how contextual forces and responses to IPV and AMP impact victimization and vulnerability.

The main conclusions of this contribution are: 1) animal maltreatment by abusive partners operates in parallel to the IPV, as a potent and integrated component of the violence directed at women; 2) bonds with animals underpin many of these dynamics and can influence resilience, resistance and vulnerability to the violence, and 3) Ecuador's social norms that endorse male dominance may foster formal and informal responses that prolong victimization, enable graver harm, even preventable harm, and leave IPV victims virtually unprotected, with little recourse to obtain justice, none for their animals.

These findings call for policies that are more responsive to victims' needs and demands[96]. For these cases, this implies recognizing IPV victims' needs for safety for themselves, their children and their animals, their demand for access to justice, and acknowledgment of the importance they attribute to their companion animals. Results further underscore the need to focus on both primary and secondary victimization and

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93 Op. cit. EDEBY, A., SAN SEBASTIÁN, M. (2021)

94 KALOF, L. Animal blood sport: A ritual display of masculinity and sexual virility in Sociology of Sport Journal 31/4 (2014) 438-454. DOI:10.1123/ssj.2014-0051

95 Op. cit. TAPIA, S.T. (2020)

96 HYDÉN, M., WADE, A., GADD, D. Response based approaches to the study of interpersonal violence (London 2016).
Op. cit. TAPIA, S.T. (2020)

address the legal gaps and the cultural and institutional contexts that may underpin failures to provide responsive support[97].

Holistic approaches to prevention, intervention and reparation are necessary and could entail policies for gender mainstreaming across different sectors and professions in Ecuador, perhaps within the UN Women programs for Safe Cities[98]. Information on the significance of animal abuse in relationships with IPV should be provided to practitioners, support services and legal operators. Protocols for different professionals should promote appropriate responses[99]and questions about animal abuse can be incorporated in intake screening instruments for IPV. Shelter options that accommodate IPV victims with their companion animals can provide safety, respond to the IPV victim's conception of family and avoid stressful separations. In terms of reparation, provisions for the HAB could be included within safeguarding restorative justice programs in Special Violence against Women Courts in Ecuador[100].

Regulatory and cultural legitimization of male-focused rituals involving organized spectacles of explicit aggression towards animals may also need to be addressed. The attribution of status and manly virtues to the bullfighters and cock-fighters, as well as the justifications for these violent activities, exalt male dominance and violence, bolster social norms of machismo, reinforce the need to validate masculinity with control over others, and can play a role in animal abuse, domestic violence, and desensitization to violence[101].

The polyvictimization[102] literature provides evidence that exposure to different *kinds* of violence has compounding long-term negative effects, over and above those conferred by severe victimization by single forms/types of violence[103]. Future research on the effects on women of IPV and AMP polyvictimization is warranted. The impact

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97 86% of the women approached for survey pre-selection (*n*= 220/256) had lived with a pet during their most recent relationship with a male partner. This figure suggests that, at least for Guayaquil, adopting responsive measures may be especially relevant.

98 BENALCÁZAR, L.G., DAMIÁN, P.C., YARAD, P.V. Mujeres víctimas de violencia de género en Ecuador: redes de apoyo y estrategias de afrontamiento in Revista Scientific 5 (2020) 90-109. DOI:10.29394/Scientific.issn.2542-2987.2020.5.E.4.90-109

99 RANDOUR, M.L., SMITH-BLACKMORE, M., BLANEY, N., DESOUSA, D., GUYONY, A. A. Animal abuse as a type of trauma: lessons for human and animal service professionals in Trauma, Violence, & Abuse 22/2 (2019) 277-288. DOI:10.1177/1524838019843197

100 Op. cit. TAPIA, S.T. (2020)

101 Op. Cit. PONCE, J.J., ÁVILA, I.D. (2024)
Op. cit. KALOF, L. (2024)

102 Defined as direct or indirect exposure to different kinds of violence.

103 SABINA, C., STRAUS, M.A. Polyvictimization by Dating Partners and Mental Health Among U.S. College Students in Violence and Victims 23/6 (2008) 667-682. DOI:10.1891/0886-6708.23.6.667

on children also deserves to be considered in the research agenda of developmental victimology studies[104] that examine long-term consequences on the lives of victimized juveniles.

Main limitations of this study are potential social desirability bias, the small size and fairly uniform composition of the sample. All participants had sought help at the same support center, and all had lived with children during the violent relationship. IPV victims who do not have or live with children, and those who do not seek help or seek only informal help could have different experiences. Women receiving support services might be more likely to report IPV and could have greater access to assistance tickets and other protective or relief measures. Some participants may have resorted to the center after unprosperous attempts to obtain help elsewhere, which could affect observations about secondary victimization.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declare no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) received financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article in the first semester of 2021: This study was funded by Coordinadora de Profesionales por la Prevención de Abusos (CoPPA).

Collaboration

The authors express their deep gratitude to the women who agreed to be interviewed and acknowledge the collaboration of *Centro Ecuatoriano para la Promoción y Acción de la Mujer-CEPAM Guayaquil* and the Autonomous Decentralized Government of the Province of Guayas.

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