



## The impact of domestic violence on women's education in EJA



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### **ABSTRACT**

This article analyzes the impact of domestic violence on the schooling process of adult women and discusses how the State can collaborate for the qualified permanence of these women in Youth and Adult Education (EJA). Based on the theories of Paulo Freire and Judith Butler, this study seeks to understand the barriers faced by these women and to reflect on public policies that can mitigate the effects of gender violence on their educational trajectory. The expected results reflect on strategies that promote the inclusion and qualified permanence of these women in EJA, contributing to their emancipation and autonomy.

**Keywords:** Gender Violence, Education, Freedom.

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## INTRODUCTION

Gender-based violence is a phenomenon that affects several spheres of women's lives, including their education. In the context of Youth and Adult Education (EJA), domestic violence can represent a significant barrier to women's schooling, negatively impacting their academic performance and their permanence in school.

In Brazil, every 24 hours, eight women are victims of domestic violence, while three out of ten women have already been affected by this form of violence, as revealed by the 10th National Survey of Violence against Women, conducted by the DataSenado Institute in collaboration with the Women's Observatory. (Agência Brasil, 2024).

This article aims to analyze how domestic violence influences the schooling process of adult women and to explore how the State can promote the qualified permanence of these women in EJA, thus contributing to a possible change of scenario in their lives.

When discussing EJA students, it is relevant to highlight that, according to Gomes (2011), youth and adult life encompass a variety of social and human experiences.

[...] their temporalities, trajectories, experiences and learning are not the same, and, even if they participate in similar socioeconomic, political and educational processes, these subjects attribute different meanings and meanings to life, society and the social practices in which they participate in their daily lives (GOMES, 2011, p. 87-88).

Education is a fundamental right and an instrument of social transformation. However, for many adult women, especially those who have been victimized by gender-based violence, continuing education is challenging. Here we ask ourselves: What are the dynamics that prevent the full schooling of these women? And also: What interventions can facilitate your permanence and academic success?

## DISCUSSION

In general terms, we have Paulo Freire widely recognized for his critical pedagogy, which proposes an education focused on emancipation and social transformation. In his work "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", Freire criticizes the traditional model of education, which he calls *banking education*. In this model, students are seen as empty receptacles in which teachers deposit knowledge. Freire argues that this passive, one-way approach perpetuates oppression as it does not encourage critical thinking or the autonomy of learners. According to Freire "When education is not liberating, the dream of the oppressed is to be the oppressor" (Freire, 1987). Still:

Liberating education is, fundamentally, a situation in which both teachers and students must be the ones who learn; they must be the cognitive subjects, even though they are different. [...] Precisely for this reason, the context of transformation is not only the classroom, but is outside it. If



the process is liberating, students and teachers will undertake a transformation that includes the context outside the classroom. (FREIRE; SHOR, 1986, p. 27).

Freire proposes a problem-solving education, which is based on dialogue and awareness, in which education should be a collaborative process, with educators and students actively participating in the construction of knowledge, critically reflecting on their reality and acting to transform it. This approach is key to promoting awareness, the process by which individuals become aware of their own situation of oppression and develop the capacity to act against it.

Awareness is one of the central concepts in Freire's pedagogy. It is a process of critically becoming aware of the social, political, and economic reality that surrounds individuals, encouraging them to question and reflect on their own experience and the world around them, thus developing a deeper understanding of the structures of power and oppression that influence their lives. This process of awareness is essential for taking power in their own lives and processes, as it allows students to recognize their capacities and rights, and see themselves as agents of change.

Dialogue, for Freire, is the basis of problem-solving education, being like a meeting between subjects who seek, together, the understanding and transformation of the world. In the educational context, dialogue promotes a horizontal relationship between educator and student, where both learn and teach mutually. This approach contrasts with banking education, which is based on a vertical and hierarchical power relationship.

In the context of gender-based violence, Freire's critical pedagogy can offer us clues to think about women's possibilities, since through the process of awareness-raising, they can develop a critical understanding of how gender-based violence is a manifestation of broader oppressive structures, rooted in patriarchal norms and social inequalities. This awareness is the first step towards transformation, allowing women to recognize their own agency and ability to resist and transform these structures.

Problem-solving education promotes critical reflection and action, encouraging them to question their reality and seek collective solutions to the problems they face. In an educational environment that values dialogue and active participation, women can share their experiences, support each other, and build a community of resistance and solidarity. This dialogic education process not only helps women overcome the traumas of violence, but also strengthens their skills and confidence to participate fully in social, economic, and political life.

In addition, the Freirean approach emphasizes the importance of contextualized and relevant education. EJA programs that incorporate the principles of critical pedagogy can tailor the curriculum to directly address the issues of gender-based violence, women's rights, and empowerment. By integrating these themes into education, institutions can provide women with the theoretical and practical tools to understand and transform their lives.



Education, seen as a practice of freedom, becomes a means of personal and social transformation. For adult women in EJA, especially those who have been victims of gender-based violence, this educational approach can provide an opportunity to rebuild their lives and claim their place in society as full citizens and agents of change.

In line with this thought, we invite Judith Butler, a central figure in gender studies and queer theory, whose post-structuralist ideas have challenged traditional conceptions of sex and gender. We have in the book "Gender Problems: Feminism and Subversion of Identity" (2016), the author stating that gender is not a fixed and stable identity, but a set of repeated performative acts that create the illusion of a gender essence, a concept of performativity that destabilizes binary notions of gender and reveals how gender norms are socially constructed and maintained.

In this way, we have in Butlerian thought, the subjective process of recognition linked to a set of norms determined by the social and political order. Follow:

If recognition characterizes an act, a practice, or even a scene between subjects, then the "condition of being recognized" characterizes the more general conditions that prepare or shape a subject for recognition—the terms, conventions, and general norms "act" in their own way, shaping a living being into a recognizable, though not without fallibility, or, in fact, unforeseen results. These categories, conventions, and norms that prepare or establish a subject for recognition, that induce such a subject, precede and make possible the act of recognition itself. In this sense, the condition of being recognized precedes recognition (BUTLER, 2018, p. 19).

The formation of recognition frames usually occurs due to the effects of performative discursive expressions. This is because,

On the one hand, the body is simply a linguistic thing, and on the other hand, it does not influence language. It [the body] carries the tongue all the time. The materiality of language, or, more precisely, the very sign that tries to denote "materiality", suggests that not everything, including materiality, has always been language. On the contrary, the materiality of the signifier (the "materiality" that comprises the two signs and their efficacy of signification) implies that there can be no reference to a pure materiality except via materiality (BUTLER, 2019, p. 124).

Butler introduces the concept of performativity to explain how gender is a continuous and reiterated act, which is imposed and regulated through social norms. According to Butler, the bodies of individuals are shaped and disciplined by these norms, which dictate what is considered "appropriate" gender behavior. Performativity, therefore, is not a voluntary expression of an inner identity, but a set of practices that are imposed by society and that produce real effects on people's bodies and lives.

In addition, Butler addresses the idea of *abject lives*, referring to those who are excluded from social and political recognition for not conforming to gender norms. These lives are seen as



less worthy of mourning or protection, becoming "unlivable." Abjection is a mechanism by which society regulates the limits of the human, determining who is considered worthy of rights and recognition.

These frameworks act to differentiate the lives we can apprehend from those we cannot (BUTLER, 2019), and the framings

It requires and institutes a "constitutive exterior" – the unspeakable, the unfeasible, the unspeakable that secures (and therefore fails to secure) the very boundaries of materiality. The normative force of performativity – its power to establish what qualifies as a "being" – is exercised not only through reiteration, but also through exclusion (BUTLER, 2019, p. 314).

Gender violence, in Butler's perspective, is a practice that reinforces and perpetuates gender normativity, punishing those who deviate from social expectations. This violence is not only physical, but also symbolic and structural, operating through norms that marginalize and exclude certain gender identities. Domestic violence, for example, is not only an act of physical aggression, but a way of disciplining and controlling female bodies, reaffirming their subordination.

The social construction of gender, according to Butler, is a process that begins early in the lives of individuals and is continuously reinforced through social interactions, media, education, and other institutions. This process creates a network of norms that dictates how individuals should behave, dress, speak, and even think, according to their assigned gender. Gender violence is a powerful tool to maintain this normativity, punishing those who defy or do not fit social expectations.

The deconstruction of gender norms is an essential step to make room for new practices of freedom. Butler proposes that by challenging and subverting gender norms, we can create new forms of existence that are not limited by traditional binaries. This involves acknowledging the performativity of gender and resisting pressures to conform to oppressive norms.

For adult women in EJA who have been victims of gender-based violence, the deconstruction of these norms is particularly relevant. By questioning the social constructs that perpetuate violence, these women can begin to rebuild their identities and claim their lives.

Integrating Butler's theories into education can help create curricula and pedagogical practices that challenge gender norms and promote inclusion and respect for all identities. This includes incorporating discussions about gender, sexuality, and power into classrooms, as well as supporting school policies and practices that protect and empower all students, regardless of their gender identity.

As we can see, Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy provides a framework for understanding education as an act of liberation and social transformation. Through the process of awareness-raising, women can develop a critical understanding of the oppressive structures that perpetuate



gender-based violence. Freire's problematizing and dialogical education promotes critical reflection and action, encouraging women to question and transform their reality. In an educational environment that values dialogue and active participation, women can recognize their strengths and thus be able to fight for their rights.

Judith Butler, with her poststructuralist theories, challenges social constructions of gender, highlighting how gender violence is a practice that reinforces gender normativity. The performativity of gender and the concept of abject lives help to understand how certain identities are marginalized and excluded. By deconstructing these norms, we can make room for new practices of freedom. In education, this means creating curricula and pedagogical practices that challenge gender norms, promoting inclusion and respect for all identities. The deconstruction of gender norms is essential for the women who are victims of violence can claim their lives and rights, including in the educational field.

Still, we find in the concept of precariousness, clues to reflect on the "shared condition of human life (in fact, as a condition that unites human and non-human animals)" (BUTLER, 2016, p.30). For the author, precariousness is not an effect of recognition or the only way to induce it, and suggests differentiating this concept from another: the "precarious condition":

The politically induced condition in which populations suffer from deficient social and economic support networks and are exposed in a differentiated way to violations, violence and death. These populations are more exposed to disease, poverty, hunger, displacement, and violence without any protection (BUTLER, 2016, 46)

By proposing the dialogue between the two authors, we intend to unite critical reflection and action, creating possibilities for questioning and transforming realities. It is necessary to challenge social constructions of gender, bringing to light how gender violence is a practice that reinforces gender normativity. Only by deconstructing these norms can we open up true spaces for new practices of freedom. According to Freire:

No pedagogy that is truly liberating can remain distant from the oppressed, treating them as unfortunate and presenting them with its models of emulation among the oppressors. The oppressed must be their own example in the struggle for their redemption (FREIRE, 1987, p. 60).

Thus, in the articulation of Freire's and Butler's theories, we have in Freire the proposal of an emancipatory education, which promotes the awareness and empowerment of women, which indicates education as a path and space for women to critically reflect on their experiences and act to transform their realities. Butler challenges gender norms by offering a theoretical basis that suggests curricula and pedagogical practices that are sensitive to such issues, directly addressing gender-based violence, and promoting respect for all identities.



Based on this integrative analysis, it is possible to consider public policies and educational practices that promote the qualified permanence of adult women in EJA, through the development of gender-sensitive curricula that incorporate content on gender violence, women's rights and emancipation, helping women to contextualize their experiences and develop a critical understanding of the social structures that influence their lives. Also, that the training of educators is aligned with gender issues and gender violence in a sensitive and informed way.

In addition, institutions that offer the EJA modality must be aware of their social role, extrapolating a technicist perspective and developing clear policies against discrimination and violence, being concerned with integrating support networks, offering psychosocial support resources, promoting dialogue and encouraging diverse pedagogical practices.

## CONCLUSION

Gender-based violence is a significant barrier that affects the schooling of adult women, especially those enrolled in Youth and Adult Education (EJA). By promoting emancipatory, inclusive, and supported education, we can create educational environments that not only welcome but also empower women, enabling them to overcome the barriers imposed by violence and reach their full potential. These practices and policies are essential to ensure the qualified permanence of women in EJA, contributing to their emancipation and social transformation.

This study sought to analyze this impact through an integrative theoretical approach, based on the contributions of Paulo Freire and Judith Butler. From this analysis, reflections emerge on the formulation of public policies and educational practices that can effectively promote the inclusion and qualified permanence of these women in education.

Critical pedagogy, proposed by Freire, emphasizes education as an emancipatory process, which should promote awareness and empowerment of the oppressed. Applying their ideas in EJA can help women develop a critical understanding of the social structures that perpetuate gender-based violence and take action to transform them. Freire's problematizing and dialogical education offers a path to personal and social transformation, essential for women who seek to rebuild their lives after experiences of violence.

Butler, for her part, challenges social constructions of gender, highlighting how gender-based violence is a practice that reinforces normativity and marginalizes certain identities. By deconstructing these norms, we can make room for new ones practices of freedom. Integrating this perspective into education means creating curricula and pedagogical practices that challenge gender norms and promote inclusion and respect for all identities, helping women to recognize and resist oppressive constructions.





The integration of these theoretical perspectives offers us a broad look to understand and address the impact of gender violence on the schooling of adult women in EJA. We think that the way forward is the development of gender-responsive curricula, the training of educators to deal with gender issues and violence, the creation of safe and welcoming environments, the promotion of dialogue and active participation, and the continued support of women.

When we talk about public policies, we consider that these should promote the creation of curricula that integrate discussions on gender, gender violence, and the guarantee of women's rights. These curricula can be designed to help women contextualize their experiences and develop a critical understanding of the social structures that influence their lives.

In addition, the continuous training of all people linked to education needs to be dimensioned in order to create spaces sensitive to gender issues and identification of possible violence, as well as strategies to create inclusive and welcoming classrooms, in order to ensure the physical and emotional safety of students. This includes creating policies against discrimination and violence, as well as implementing procedures, forming internal and external networks, and clear flows to deal with incidents of gender-based violence.

Policies should encourage pedagogical practices that value dialogue and the active participation of students. Considering what Freire proposes, this means creating spaces where women can engage in critical discussions about their experiences and collaborate in the construction of knowledge, actively participating in educational decisions and in the definition of institutional policies.





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