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# Dating violence victimization, perceived gravity in dating violence behaviors, sexism, romantic love myths and emotional dependence between female and male adolescents

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**ABSTRACT.** A field study was designed to determine whether gender differences exist among adolescents in self-reported victimization of dating violence, perceived gravity of dating violence behaviors, sexism, myths about romantic love and emotional dependence. For that purpose, a random sample of 246 adolescents, 125 girls and 123 boys, aged from 14 to 17 years ( $M = 15.39$ ;  $SD = 0.95$ ), was selected from the community and answered with instruments to measure the victimization of dating violence, perceived gravity of dating violence behaviors, sexism, myths about romantic love and emotional dependence. The results showed that girls perceived more gravity in dating violence behaviors than boys; that boys and girls equally reported being victims of dating violence, except for physical violence victimization which was more reported by boys; and that boys revealed greater emotional dependence, romantic love myths and sexism than girls. In addition, we observed that these variables were significantly correlated with each other. Finally, the implications of the results for the design of prevention and intervention programs with adolescents are discussed.

**KEYWORDS:** Victimization, Relationships, Sexism, Romantic love myths, Emotional dependence, Adolescents.

## Victimización de violencia entre novios, gravedad percibida en las conductas de violencia entre novios, mitos del amor romántico, y dependencia emocional entre chicos y chicas adolescentes

**RESUMEN.** Con el objetivo de conocer si existen diferencias de género entre los adolescentes en victimización autoinformada de violencia entre novios, percepción de la gravedad de las conductas de violencia entre novios, sexismo, sexismo, mitos del amor romántico y dependencia emocional, se diseñó un estudio de campo. Para ello, se tomó aleatoriamente de la comunidad a 246 adolescentes, 125 chicas y 123 chicos, aged from 14 to 17 years ( $M = 15.39$ ;  $SD = 0.95$ ), que respondieron a instrumentos de medida de la victimización de violencia entre novios, gravedad percibida de las conductas de violencia entre novios, sexismo, mitos sobre el amor romántico y dependencia emocional. Los resultados mostraron que las chicas percibían más gravedad en las conductas de violencia que los chicos; que chicos y chicas informaban por un igual ser víctimas de violencia entre novios, a excepción de victimización de violencia física que fue más informada por los chicos; y que los chicos manifestaron una mayor dependencia emocional, una mayor creencia en el amor romántico y sexismo que las chicas. Adicionalmente observamos que estas variables estaban significativamente correlacionadas entre sí. Finalmente, se discuten las implicaciones de los resultados para los diseños de programas de prevención e intervención con adolescentes.

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** Victimización, Relaciones de pareja, Sexism, Mitos del amor romántico, Dependencia emocional, Adolescentes.

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Adolescence is a critical stage for the development of an individual, in which important physical, psychoemotional and social changes occur (Azdemir, Utikalp, & Pallo, 2016; Viejo & Ortega-Ruiz, 2015). In this period, teenagers begin to meet potential couples and

experience romantic relationships (Connolly & McIsaac, 2009; Tuval-Mashiach, Walsh, Harel, & Shulman, 2008). However, these relationships are not always positive, sometimes violent dynamics and abusive behaviour can develop within them. Dating Violence has been defined as “as physical, sexual, psychological or emotional aggression in a courtship relationship to control, dominate, or feel superior in the relationship” made up of adolescents or youth (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDCP], 2007). The Spanish National Institute of Statistics (INE) alerted about the high number of complaints regarding this type of violence by minors, reaching 653 in 2017 and 677 in 2018 (INE, 2018). Internationally, the levels of violence received in courtship range from 0.4% to 57.3% for physicals, between 8.5% and 95.5% for psychological and between 0.1% and 64.6% for sexual. In terms of violence, these figures range from 3.8% to 41.9% for physicals, from 4.2% to 97% for psychological and from 1.2% to 58.8% for sexual (Rubio-Garay et al., 2017). This discrepancy in prevalence rates is due to the taking of different definitions of violence in adolescent courtship, and by extension, to the use of also different measures (Gallego, Novo, Fariña, & Arce, 2019), although it is currently considered a highly prevalent phenomenon (Rubio-Garay, López-González, Carrasco, & Amor, 2017; Yanez-Peñúñuri, Martínez-Gómez & Rey-Anaconda, 2019; Wincentak, Connolly, & Card, 2017).

Unlike violence between adult couples, violence in teenage courtship is characterized by the dual role of aggressor and victim that many adolescents play in their love relationships (Marcos, Gancedo, Selaya, & Novo, 2019; Moral, García, Cuetos, & Sirvent, 2017; Carrascosa, Cava & Buelga, 2018; Elder, Monks, Sánchez, & Ortega-Ruiz, 2016). Therefore, the researchers warn of reciprocity in the execution of violent acts by both members of the couple (Alegria & Rodriguez, 2015; Moral et al., 2017; Rubio-Garay, Carrasco, Amor, & López-González, 2015). Although in DV the different types of physical, psychological and sexual violence occur simultaneously (Alegria & Rodriguez, 2015; Rubio-Garay et al., 2017), the prevalence of different forms is not the same

for both genders. Like this, boys tend to exercise more sexual violence (Rubio-Garay et al., 2017), while girls more perpetuate psychological violence (Alegria & Rodríguez, 2015). As for physical violence, there are no conclusive results, as some studies indicate that in more done by boys (Rubio-Garay et al., 2017), while others point out otherwise (Rey-Anaconda, 2013).

In addition, adolescents who are involved in intimate partner violence experience consequences at the physical, relational and behavioral level (Cava, Buelga, & Tomás, 2018; Foshee et al., 2016; Vagi, O'Malley, Basile, & Vivolo-Kantor, 2015), such as anxiety, under self-concept and depression, among others (Carrascosa, Cava & Buelga, 2016; Carrascosa et al., 2018). Studies warn that this type of damage can be transferred to adulthood (Exner-Cortens, Eckenrode & Rothman, 2013; Sunday et al., 2011), being a risk factor for future aggressions in the adult couple (Rubio-Garay, Ortiz & García-Rodríguez, 2019). On the other hand, those young people who are able to maintain positive intimate relationships present greater adaptation and satisfaction in their adult stage (Adamczyk & Segrin 2016).

Based on the above, it can be said that the processes of victimization between adolescents and young people in their relationships represent a serious social and public health problem (Kings, Foshee, Niolon, Reidy, & Hall, 2016; Rothman & Xuan, 2013; Soller, Copp, Haynie, & Kuhlemeier, 2020), whose analysis must be approached from a gender perspective through an analysis of cognitions that can act as underlying explanatory mechanisms of violent behavior (Nava-Reyes, Rojas-Solís, Greathouse, & Morales, 2018; Novo, Fariña, Seijo, & Arce, 2012).

#### •PERCEIVED GRAVITY OF DATING VIOLENCE BEHAVIORS

According to the Gender Schema Theory (Bem, 1981), within the framework of the Socio-Cultural Feminist Theory, the dichotomization of the masculine and the feminine gives rise to the creation of gender schemes, cognitive constructs that are internalized from early childhood, with differential and unique characteristics for men and women, which are decisive for the

development of individuals. In this way, they will process the information in different ways, leading them to different experiences of the same events (Bem, 1981, 1983). Gender schemes can therefore affect perceptions of violence, the most consistent with the male and socially most accepted role of men (Bem, 1981). Likewise, the role of the female gender is linked with qualities such as submission and passivity, versus the masculine, which relates to strength, aggression and dominance (Hyde, 2005; McHugh & Frieze, 1997; Reyes et al., 2016). From this positioning, men value violence as less problematic than women, which leads to them having less sense of gravity about those behaviors that constitute violence in relationships (Hamby & Jackson, 2010) and, consequently, that they accept to a greater extent violence against girls (Dardis, Edwards, Kelley, & Gidycz, 2013, 2015; Hamby & Jackson, 2010). The perceived gravity of dating violence behaviors could be a key element in preventing victimization and yet this relationship has been poorly investigated (Ameral, Reed, & Hines, 2017; Sánchez, Sobral, & Seijo, 2016).

#### •SEXIST BELIEFS AND ROMANTIC LOVE MYTHS

Gender schemes, in their relationship to cognitive aspects, affect each person's beliefs and, consequently, to the links between women and men (Nava-Reyes et al., 2018; Novo, Herbon, & Amado, 2016). Specifically, sexist attitudes form part of the basis of courtship relationships among young people. According to Glick and Fiske's Theory of Ambivalent Sexism (1996, 1999, 2001), there is a differentiation of power in relations between women and men, where sexist attitudes have considerable ambivalence on the part of each sex towards the other. Under this theory, sexism is a multidimensional construct, the result of the combination of hostile sexism, characterized by assuming a stereotypical and negative view of women as inferior; and benevolent sexism, based on considering weak women, in need of the protection of men (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 1999, 2001). According to this, teenagers who exhibit sexist attitudes maintain behaviors prone to intimate partner violence (Rey-Anacona, Cruz, Jimenez, & Guajardo 2017; Fernández-Fuertes, Carcedo, Orgaz, &

Fuertes, 2018), presenting higher sexism scores the boys (Pradas & Perles, 2012). In addition, research based on this positioning suggests that people who support sexist attitudes have a greater acceptance of myths than those who do not (Camplá, Novo, Sanmarco, & Arce, 2019).

Among the strongly ingrained and socially accepted beliefs that can be held about love (Yela, 2003) are the myths of romantic love, such as "love can do everything" or 'jealousy are a test of love'. These beliefs minimize the perception of aggression within the couple, as many teenagers justify violence through them (Ferrer, Bosch, & Navarro, 2010; Martínez-León, Mathes, Avendaño, Peña, & Sierra, 2018; Rodríguez-Castro, Lameiras-Fernández, Carrera-Fernández, & Vallejo-Medina, 2013). In this way, sexist myths and attitudes can be flattering elements of the continuity and permanence of violence in courtship (Rubio-Garay et al., 2015). However, the results are also contradictory in terms of gender differences, some studies indicate that they have higher prevalence of myths (Bisquert-Bover, Giménez-García, Gil-Juliá, Martínez-Gómez, & Gil-Llario, 2019), other research reflects that it is the girls who have the greatest adherence to myths (Bosch et al., 2010; Moroccan & Cervera, 2014).

#### •EMOTIONAL DEPENDENCE

Management of management and emotional expression is essential in promoting positive and healthy relationships (Morrish, Rickard, Chin & Vella-Brodrick, 2018). However, adolescence is a period characterized mainly by difficulty controlling emotions, especially in loving relationships. The concept of emotional dependence has been widely examined in the field of violence on adolescent partners (Cañete & Díaz, 2019; Moral et al., 2017; Urbiola & Estevez, 2015). This term refers to an extreme need for affection from one person to another (Pradas & Perles, 2012). Within the context of the couple, dependents do not imagine their existence without their partner, which causes a great deal of inappropriate behaviors as long as the relationship does not end (Izquierdo & Gómez-Acosta, 2013; Skvortsova & Shumskiy, 2014). In this sense, adolescents who reflect

greater emotional dependence present an increased risk of intimate partner violence (Moral et al., 2017). As for gender differences, they are also not conclusive, some research reveals that kids have higher scores in emotional dependence (Moral et al., 2017; Urbiola & Estevez, 2015), compared to others that reflect higher scores the girls (Alonso-Arbiol, Shaver, & Yárnoz, 2002; Ehrenberg & Saffrey, 2007).

## • RESEARCH AIMS AND HYPOTHESES

Taking into account the literature set out above our research aims to analyze a lesser-known aspect of dating violence, the perception of the gravity that adolescents present about such dating violence behaviors, from a gender perspective (European Commission, 2009). Thus, in this work we are interested in analyzing gender differences in perceived gravity and victimization, as well as in associated variables such as sexist beliefs and myths or emotional dependence. In addition, taking into account the variables included in this study, we aim to lay the foundations for an explanatory model of the perception of gravity that takes into account gender differences.

## METHOD

### • PARTICIPANTS

The study involved 246 subjects, 125 women (50.8%) and 123 men (49.2%), aged between 14 and 17 years ( $M = 15.39$ ;  $SD = 0.949$ ). In terms of the course, 29.3% belonged to third of ESO, 32.1% were in fourth of ESO and 38.6% were first of Bachiller. Regarding the repetition of the course, 89.4% indicated never repeating, compared to 8.5% and 2.0% that they scored once and twice, respectively.

### • PROCEDURE AND DESIGN

To obtain the sample, authorization with the school was processed, the consent of the parents and the willfulness of the participants. Then, a random sample of adolescents was taken from the school. All participants completed the instruments, responding individually and

anonymously. The instruments were managed by staff trained in person and in a single session with each group (9 groups in total).

### • MEASUREMENT INSTRUMENTS

A questionnaire to measure sociodemographic variables was used: gender, age, course, course repetition and province.

The Dating Violence Questionnaire-R (DVQ-R) (CUVINO-R; Rodríguez-Díaz, Herrero, Rodríguez-Franco, Bringas-Molleda, Paíno-Quesada y Pérez, 2017) was used to evaluate the experience of victimization in young people within a couple's relationship. Subjects responded to this instrument on a 5-points Likert scale (0 = *never*, 1 = *one time*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *many times*, 4 = *all the time*). This instrument consists of five factors: Physical ( $\alpha = .75$ ), Sexual ( $\alpha = .74$ ), Humiliation ( $\alpha = .72$ ), Detachment ( $\alpha = .68$ ), and Coercion ( $\alpha = .64$ ). The total scale was internally consistent ( $\alpha = .85$ ). Specifically, in this study, the reliability for the total scale was of  $\alpha = .92$ , with values of  $\alpha = .86$  for the Physical subscale, of  $\alpha = .80$  for the Sexual subscale, of  $\alpha = .84$  for the Humiliation subscale, of  $\alpha = .68$  for the Detachment subscale, and of  $\alpha = .71$  for the Coercion subscale. In addition, the scale was modified incorporating the perceived gravity of dating violence behaviors, on a 5-points Likert scale (1 = *nothing serious*, 2 = *almost nothing serious*, 3 = *little serious*, 4 = *pretty serious*, 5 = *very serious*). Internal consistency was of  $\alpha = .96$ .

As for measuring, the Escala de Sexismo [Scale of Sexism] of Recio, Square & Ramos (2007), consisting of 26 items, was used. This instrument is divided into two factors: benevolent sexism and hostile sexism. The subjects responded to this measure on a 6-points Likert-scale (0 = *totally disagree*, 1 = *moderately disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *agree*, 4 = *moderately agree*, and 5 = *strongly agree*). In our study the internal consistency was of  $\alpha = .92$  for the total scale and of  $\alpha = .91$  for the Hostile Sexism subscale and of  $\alpha = .85$  for Benevolent Sexism subscale.

The Myths Scale towards Love (Rodríguez-Castro et al., 2013) was used. It consists of 7 items, divided into two factors: myth of the idealization of romantic love and the myth of the

love-abuse bond. The scale presented adequate reliability ( $\alpha = .70$  and  $\alpha = 0.86$ , respectively). The subjects responded to this instrument on a 5-points Likert scale (1 = *totally disagree*, 2 = *disagree*, 3 = *neither agree nor disagree*, 4 = *agree* and 5 = *totally agree*). The total scale was shown to be internally consistent ( $\alpha = 0.71$ ).

The Emotional Dependency Scale in youth and adolescent courtship to measure the expression of emotional dependence on relationships (DEN; Urbiola, Estevez & Iraurgi, 2014) was administered. This instrument consists of 12 items grouped into four dimensions: avoid being alone, need/exclusivity, need to please and asymmetric ratio. Subjects responded to this measurement on a 6-points Likert scale (0 = *never*, 1 = *one time*, 2 = *sometimes*, 3 = *many times*, 4 = *almost always*, and 5 = *always*). In this study, the total scale obtained a coefficient of reliability of  $\alpha = .89$ .

## • DATA ANALYSIS

A Student t-test for independent samples to examine gender differences in the variables under study was used. The size of the effect was also analyzed using Cohen's *d*, the parameters of which are set between 0.20 (*small*), 0.50 (*medium*) and 0.80 (*large*) (Cohen, 1992). Correlations through Pearson's *r* to analyze the relationship between variables were calculated.

## RESULTS

First, the difference in means in perceived gravity of dating violence behaviors was found (see Table 1). The results reflected significant differences in gender, featuring higher scores for girls, with low and medium effect sizes, with the exception of the detachment factor, where no significant differences between boys and girls were found.

Tabla 1  
Gender differences in Perceived Gravity of Dating Violence Behaviors

Variable	Gender	N	t(df)	p	M(SD)	95% CI	d
PHYSICAL	Girls	101	2.84(150)	.005	14.84(2.87)	0.42, 2.32	0.44
	Boys	79					
SEXUAL	Girls	109	3.82(148)	.000	14.98(2.75)	0.86, 2.70	0.58
	Boys	81					
HUMILIATION	Girls	105	2.41(185)	.017	14.51(2.88)	0.19, 1.93	0.35
	Boys	82					
DETACHMENT	Girls	110	1.67 188)	.096	12.60(3.03)	-0.14, 1.71	0.25
	Boys	80					
COERCION	Girls	105	2.85(164)	.005	13.12(3.08)	0.43, 2.38	0.42
	Boys	84					

Tabla 2  
Gender differences in Dating Violence Victimization

Variable	Gender	N	t(df)	p	M(SD)	95% CI	d
PHYSICAL	Girls	121	-2.04(133)	.042	0.11(0.51)	-0.63, -0.02	-0.30
	Boys	113					
SEXUAL	Girls	123	-0.91(236)	.928	0.34(1.10)	-0.35, 0.32	-0.02
	Boys	115					
HUMILIATION	Girls	122	-1.53(157)	.126	0.23(0.80)	-0.62, 0.07	-0.21
	Boys	115					
DETACHMENT	Girls	124	0.54(236)	.587	1.25(2.22)	-0.38, 0.67	0.07
	Boys	114					
COERCION	Girls	123	-0.27(235)	.782	0.60(1.48)	-0.46, 0.34	-0.04
	Boys	114					

In terms of the dating violence victimization, no significant differences in the factors were found, except for the physical factor, in which the boys scored higher (see Table 2).

In table 3, following the same procedure, examined the difference in means in beliefs (hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, and romantic love myths). Significant differences between girls and boys in hostile sexism, benevolent sexism and romantic love myths, with higher scores on the part of boys were confirmed.

In examining the difference in means in expression of emotional dependence in couple of relationships, the results reflected significant differences in dimensions avoiding being alone, need for exclusivity and need to please between

girls and boys. However, no significant differences between the two groups in the asymmetrical relationship (see Table 4) were found.

As for the correlations between perceived gravity, victimization, sexist beliefs (hostile sexism and benevolent sexism), myths about romantic love and emotional dependence (see Table 5), significant relationships were found between perceived gravity and victimization, this relationship being inverse and significant. In addition, significant inverse relationships between perceived gravity with hostile sexism, benevolent sexism and myths were found. As for victimization, significant relationships with hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, myths and the four subscales of emotional dependence were found.

*Tabla 3*  
Gender differences in Sexist Beliefs and Myths of Romantic Love

Variable	Gender	N	t(df)	p	M(SD)	95% CI	d
HOSTILE SEXISM	Girls	120	-4.30(135)	.000	15.40(3.02)	-5.6, -2.09	-0.58
	Boys	113					
BENEVOLENT SEXISM	Girls	122	-3.07(225)	.002	15.50(6.68)	-4.84, -1.06	-0.39
	Boys	117					
MYTH ABOUT IDEALIZATION LOVE	Girls	122	-2.10(238)	.037	12.67(4.03)	-2.19, -0.07	-0.27
	Boys	118					
MYTH OF THE LOVE-ABUSE BOND	Girls	125	-2.88(177)	.004	2.21(0.80)	-0.75, -0.14	-0.37
	Boys	119					

*Tabla 4*  
Gender differences in Emotional Dependence

Variable	Gender	N	t(df)	p	M(SD)	95% CI	d
AVOID BEING ALONG	Girls	122	-3.66 (170)	.000	1.17(1.38)	-1.57, -0.47	-0.48
	Boys	116					
NEED/EXCLUSIVITY	Girls	119	-4.69 (176)	.000	1.00(1.66)	-2.08, -0.85	-0.62
	Boys	113					
NEED TO PLEASE	Girls	121	-5.78 (182)	.000	1.18(1.97)	-2.81, -1.38	-0.76
	Boys	116					
ASYMMETRIC RATIO	Girls	120	-1.89 (216)	.059	1.60(2.27)	-1.33, 0.025	-0.25
	Boys	117					

*Tabla 5*  
Pearson's Correlations among Variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
PHYSICAL (V)	-																
SEXUAL (V)	.766**	-															
HUMILIATION (V)	.803**	.711**	-														
DETACHMENT (V)	.521**	.551**	.609**	-													
COERCION (V)	.700**	.678**	.750**	.679**	-												
PHYSICAL (P)	-.187*	-.083	-.084	.022	-.071	-											
SEXUAL (P)	-.330**	-.168*	-.160*	-.059	-.119	.861**	-										
HUMILIATION (P)	-.284**	-.087	-.166*	-.110	-.189*	.842**	.873**	-									
DETACHMENT (P)	-.237**	-.053	-.124	-.161*	-.140	.682**	.748**	.805**	-								
COERCION (P)	-.190*	-.077	-.086	-.121	-.241**	.742**	.800**	.848**	.810**	-							
HOSTILE SEXISM	.319**	.333**	.263**	.081	.198**	-.270**	-.258**	-.131	-.172*	-.281**	-						
BENEVOLENT SEXISM	.186**	.209**	.159*	.128	.166*	-.291**	-.314**	-.299**	-.261**	-.387**	.675**	-					
MYTH ABOUT THE IDEALIZATION OF LOVE	.172**	.125	.132*	.091	.172**	-.140	-.211**	-.111	-.072	-.114	.229**	.248**	-				
MYTH OF THE LOVE-ABUSE BOND	.259**	.371**	.251**	.178**	.342**	-.193**	-.206**	-.170*	-.160*	-.281**	.366**	.302**	.272**	-			
AVOID BEING ALONG	.285**	.251**	.326**	.236**	.293	-.004	-.104	-.077	-.030	-.092	.157*	.253**	.322**	.177**	-		
NEED/ EXCLUSIVITY	.263**	.252**	.284**	.217**	.310	-.079	-.194**	-.180*	-.072	-.203**	.144*	.329**	.391**	.274**	.687**	-	
NEED TO PLEASE	.259**	.138*	.268**	.190**	.231	-.069	-.207**	-.179*	-.116	-.193**	.165*	.283**	.307**	.147*	.671**	.755**	-
ASYMMETRIC RATIO	.251**	.294**	.395**	.305**	.381	-.062	-.124	-.095	-.062	-.145	.163*	.330**	.361**	.249**	.646**	.668**	.572**

## DISCUSSION

Our research presents a number of limitations to consider when generalizing and extrapolating the results. First, the participants' responses may be mediated by social desirability or denial, two forms of disguise (Arce, Fariña, Seijo, & Novo, 2015; Fariña, Redondo, Seijo, Novo, & Arce, 2017). Second, the size and heterogeneity of the sample, since the participants belong to a specific geographical scope. Third, this study should be supplemented by other variables that interact with gender beliefs, such as socio-community factors (Fariña, Arce, & Novo, 2008), family or personal (Corrás, Seijo, Fariña, Novo, Arce, & Cabanach, 2017).

In relation to the perceived gravity on dating violence, our results reveal significant gender differences, given that girls perceive dating violence behaviors as more serious than boys, with the exception of detached behaviors in which there are no differences, and consequently less acceptance of violent dating behaviors (Dardis et al., 2013; Dardis et al., 2015; Hamby and Jackson, 2010). We also found gender differences in sexist beliefs and myths of romantic love, with boys scoring higher on these variables, according to other research (Bisquert-Bover et al, 2019; Pradas and Perles, 2012), reproducing traditional gender schemes where the female role is linked to submission and passivity; versus the male role which is related to strength, aggressiveness and dominance (Hyde 2005; McHugh and Frieze, 1997; Reyes et al., 2016), and which can affect perceptions of violence (Ameral et al., 2017; Dardis et al., 2015; Novo et al, 2016).

On the other hand, our results reflect that there are no gender differences in victimization. This corroborates the existence of reciprocity of violence by both members of the partner, the main feature of the DV, as indicated by the literature (Alegria & Rodriguez, 2015; Moral et al., 2017; Carrascosa et al., 2018; Viejo et al., 2016), with the exception of the physical one, where in our study there were significant differences in gender, presenting higher scores the boys. In addition, our results support the relationship between victimization in relationships with sexist beliefs and myths of romantic love (Rey-Anacona et al.,

2017; Fernández-Fuertes et al., 2018; Pradas & Perles, 2012), showing that sexist attitudes and myths can be flattering elements of the beginning and continuity of dating violence (Rubio-Garay et al., 2015), and that they must therefore be included as a content of programs to prevent victimization in courtship. Therefore, for effective prevention, the reduction of sexist beliefs, gender stereotypes and myths about love (De La Rue, Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2014; Muñoz-Rivas, Redondo-Rodríguez, & Ronzón-Tirado, 2019; Reyes et al., 2016), as it can be a protective factor against violence in the loving relationship (Garrido & Casas, 2009; Montolío, Ros, & Portela, 2016).

Regarding emotional dependence, our results also reflect significant differences in gender, with greater emotional dependence. That is, kids have a more need for exclusivity, being alone, and pleasing. In addition, the subscales of emotional dependence were significantly and directly related to sexist beliefs, myths and victimization behaviors. In this sense, it should be noted that deficits in emotional competition (Salovey, Mayer, Goldman, Turvey, & Palfai, 1995), hinder empathy, control and emotional regulation and, by extension, facilitate emotional deregulation, which relates to antisocial and criminal behaviors (Arce, Seijo, Fariña & Mohamed-Mohand, 2010; Ferriz, Sobral & Gómez-Fraguela, 2018). In fact, it has been found that inadequate management of emotions to be inversely associated with physical, psychological and sexual violence (Stappenbeck, Davis, Cherf, Gulati, & Kajumulo, 2016). Therefore, the development of adaptive forms to respond to emotions could also act as a protective factor against violence in adolescent courtship (Fernández-González, Calvete, Orue, & Echezarraga, 2018) that can be considered in the design of preventive strategies.

In the face of intervention, the perceived gravity can be considered as a dynamic, modifiable and therefore objective risk factor of the intervention (Basanta, Fariña, & Arce; 2018; Bonta & Andrews, 2016), in which gender differences are to be considered. All this will allow us to meet the recommendations of international organizations that demand an effort to prevent violence in adolescent courtship (CDCP, 2020), and to build capacity for prevention in order to



reduce the risk of victimization (World Health Organization, 2014), implementing evidence-based programs of prevention and intervention (Novo, Fariña, Seijo, Vázquez, & Arce, 2019; Yanez-Peñúñuri et al., 2019; Wincentak et al., 2017). However, it is necessary to further increase knowledge of the specific factors related to dating violence (Rubio-Garay et al., 2015), as well as in the establishment of rigid measurement criteria clearly defined for the classification of types of violence.

- **Conflict of interest.**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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