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## **PRESENTATION**

Knowledge transference from research to practice is the main objective that research should pursue and achieve. This implies that research design must be aimed to drive practical implications. The present monographic contains a selection, based on a double-blind peer review process, of original empirical research and meta-analytic reviews of communications presented to the Annual Conference of the European Association of Psychology and Law 2019, held in Santiago de Compostela (Spain), from 17 to 20 July 2019.

The editors

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## RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE BRIEF COPE SCALE AMONG OFFENDERS IN CHINA

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### Abstract

The Brief Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced (B-COPE) Scale is a self-completed questionnaire measuring coping strategies, which contains 14 subscales. In the present study, the B-COPE Scale Chinese version were validated among 282 male offenders selected from a medium security prison in China. The results showed that internal consistencies ranged from 0.51-0.90. Exploratory Factor Analysis yielded eight factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, which together accounted for 61.98% of the variance in responding which was generally consistent with the original B-COPE scale. Significant correlation was found between the mean adaptive(/maladaptive) coping scores of the B-COPE and the mean positive(/negative) coping scores of Simplified Coping Style Questionnaire (SCSQ). The Chinese version B-COPE has satisfactory reliability and validity, and can be applied in Chinese offenders.

**Keywords:** Coping Orientation to Problems Experienced, B-COPE, coping strategies, offenders

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## **Introduction**

Coping with life hardship and maladaptive coping behaviour were considered to be related to offending and re-offending (Lau & Tin, 1996). Carver defined coping strategies as the specific efforts, both behavioural and psychological that people employ to master, tolerate, reduce or minimize stressful events (Carver, Scheier, & Weintraub, 1989). Studies have found that social support had a significant impact on individuals' coping strategies: the more social support an individual receives, and the more likely they are to respond positively to stress and stress events, reducing impulsivity and attack levels (Li, 2005). Recent studies focused more on coping strategies of sexual offenders and juvenile offenders rather than violent offenders, since sexual offenders were found to be more related to emotional problems (Pagé, Tourigny, & Renaud, 2010), and researchers believed that maladaptive coping strategies of juvenile offenders were related to conduct disorder and offending. Youth sexual offenders were found to tend to apply emotional responses to cope with difficulties they encountered in life, which was explained by Pagé et al. (2010) that may increase their level of stress and risk to commit sexual crime or assault. (Pagé et al., 2010). Looman, Abracen, Difazio, and Maillet (2004) compared coping strategies of rapists, child molesters and violent offenders using the Coping Inventory for Stressful Situations(CISS) and found that the possibility that sex offenders apply emotional coping strategies and have difficulty in alcohol use were significantly higher than the control group. (Looman et al., 2004). Studies on offenders in prison have found that most prisoners used passive, aggressive coping strategies (Ricciardelli, 2014). Maladaptive coping strategies were also found in adolescent offenders. Ferrer et al. (2010) studies 128 adolescent residents of Barcelona and found compared to high school students, young offenders tend to use passive or avoidance coping strategies.

Carver (1997) developed the Coping Orientation to Problems experienced (COPE) inventory and the Brief-COPE(B-COPE) based on theoretical arguments about coping strategies and results of previous researched. The full COPE contains 60 items, incorporates 15 conceptually distinct scales with 4 items per scale. Carver brought up that studies of coping strategies need to minimize the time taken to finish the scale; therefore, he developed the Brief-COPE to meet with the applying settings. (Carver, 1997).

The Brief-COPE (B-COPE) is a brief form of the Coping Orientation to Problems experienced (COPE) inventory. The B-COPE contains 14 scales with 2 items each scale, rated by the four-point Likert scale ranging from "I haven't been doing this at all" (score 1) to "I have been doing this a lot" (score 4). The higher score of the subscale demonstrates more likely the

coping strategies were used by the respondents. The first eight scales were named as adaptive coping strategies, and the latter six scales were grouped together as maladaptive coping strategies (Cooper, Katona, & Livingston, 2008). Maladaptive coping strategies were found to be associated with addictive behaviours, such as smoking, substance abuse (Revell, Warburton, & Wesnes, 1985). The B-COPE's original report showed excellent internal consistencies for the factor of religion dimension ( $\alpha=0.82$ ) and substance use ( $\alpha=0.90$ ). Other factors also showed acceptable internal consistencies ranging from 0.50 to 0.73. (Carver, 1997).

To examine the convergent validity, the Simplified Coping Style Questionnaire (SCSQ) was applied in this study. SCSQ was generalized by Xie (1998) according to the coping theories in Chinese sample. Xie (1998) argued that though researchers have tried to adapt the questionnaires of coping strategies and styles (e.g. Ways of Coping Questionnaire, WCQ) in Chinese population, the results were not satisfactory due to cultural differences. There were two reasons that can account for the situation: first, the narrative of the scale under the western context was not suitable for Chinese population; second, the results of factor analysis were inconsistent. Therefore, Xie (1998) combined the characteristics of Chinese cultural background, simplified and modified the foreign coping style scales, and developed the SCSQ. The  $\alpha$  of the full scale is 0.90, of which the positive coping subscale's  $\alpha$  is 0.89, and the negative coping subscale's  $\alpha$  is 0.78 (Xie, 1998). As the scale that developed in the Chinese context, the SCSQ was used in this study as the criterion scale to examine the convergent validity of the revised version of B-COPE.

B-COPE and COPE were widely applied in health-related researches, such as in HIV samples, female breast cancer patients and Alzheimer's disease patients (Cooper et al., 2008; Mohanraj et al., 2015; Yusoff, Low, & Yip, 2010). The studies have found that coping strategies of styles influenced how patients deal with the stress when they have been diagnosed and during treatment. Meyer (2001) found coping strategies of severe mental illness patients have relations to their well-being, functioning, and relations symptoms (Meyer, 2001), but few studies used the tool in the prisoners or offenders sample in China. In addition, most scales developed to measure coping have been in the context of the western world, which raises concerns about their applicability and relevance to the Chinese cultural context, including stressors and emotional responses defined by culture and language used to describe them (Weiss & Kleinman, 1988). Given the situation, we adapted the Brief COPE to Chinese culture and examined the reliability and validity of the Brief COPE used in Chinese offenders.

## Method

### Participants

The participants were 282 male offenders (age  $M = 33.85$ ,  $SD = 7.76$ ; years of education  $M = 7.91$ ,  $SD = 2.45$ ) selected from a medium security prison. The inclusion criteria were: (1) age 18 through 50 years at the time of testing, (2) not illiterate, and (3) normal or corrected-to-normal visual acuity. The study was approved by the Prison Administration Bureau of the Ministry of Justice. All participants had written informed consent.

### Measures

#### *B-COPE*

The B-COPE is a 4-likert, 28-item, 14-subscale version of COPE developed by Carver (1997). The 14 subscales respectively measures: active coping, planning, positive reframing, acceptance, humour, religion, use of emotional support, use of instrumental support, self-distraction, denial, venting, substance use, behavioural disengagement, and self-blame. The first eight scales were named as adaptive coping strategies, and the latter six scales were grouped together as maladaptive coping strategies. The B-COPE can also be grouped into emotion-focused versus problem-focused scales. However, in this study, we chose adaptive versus maladaptive scales to assess the convergent validity.

#### *Simplified Coping Style Questionnaire*

The Simplified Coping Style Questionnaire (SCSQ) was generalized by Xie (1998) according to the coping theories in Chinese sample. SCSQ consists of 20 items, 2-subscale: positive coping (12 items) and negative coping (8 items), rated by the four-point Likert scale, ranging from “I have never chosen this way” (score 0) to “I have been choosing this way” (score 3).

### Procedure

Translation and revision of the items of the B-COPE followed the procedures: (1) The English version of B-COPE was translated into Chinese by a psychology PhD student and a psychology graduate student; (2) A group of 5 experts (one psychology professor, two PhD student and two master students) discussed the semantic content, language expression and cultural adaptability of B-COPE translation; (3) Asked the professionals of the English Translation Association to translate the Chinese version the scale back; (4) Compared the translated version with the original English version and re-examine the inconsistencies. Amend

to statements that did not conform to Chinese cultural background and expression habits. Experts group reviewed the Chinese version of the scale again and modified the items, determined the finale version to test in participants.

Three steps included in testing on reliability and validity of the Chinese version of the B-COPE: (1) assess of convergent validity; (2) conduct exploratory factor analysis (EFA) of the revised scale; (3) assess of internal consistency reliability.

### **Data analysis**

Data obtained was analysed using the Statistical Package of Social Science (SPSS) version 15.0. 282 of the offenders agreed to participate, and answered the Chinese Version of B-COPE and SCSQ. The effect size of each domain of B-COPE was presented in the study, and the internal consistency of the B-COPE was assessed by calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. EFA was conducted to valid the construct of the revised scale.

## **Results**

### **Participant characteristics**

Table 1 shows the socio-demographic characteristics of the 282 participants. All participants are male offenders (age  $M = 33.85$ ,  $SD = 7.76$ , years of education  $M = 7.91$ ,  $SD = 2.45$  at the time of testing). Other characteristics including ethnicity, kinds of Crime and kinds of penalty. Kinds of Crime is subjected to the major crime that accounted for most sentences. Violent offence includes robbery, rape, intentional injures, negligent injures, intentional homicide, negligent homicide; Others includes burglary, drug related crimes, fraud, forcing women into prostitution, opening gambling house, etc.

### **Validity**

#### *Convergent Validity*

The overall mean score for adaptive coping of the Chinese Version Brief COPE was 2.27( $SD = 0.42$ ), and for maladaptive coping it was 1.80 ( $SD = 0.43$ ) . There was significant correlation between the mean adaptive coping scores of the Brief COPE and the mean positive coping scores of SCSQ. Significant correlation was also found between the mean maladaptive coping scores of the Brief COPE and the mean negative coping scores of SCSQ. (Table 2)

**Table 1.** Participant Characteristics (n=282)

	<i>n</i>	%
Ethnicity		
Han	145	51.42%
Hui	137	48.58%
Yeas of Education		
0-6	78	27.66%
7-9	180	63.83%
10-12	22	7.80%
Above 12	2	0.71%
Crime		
Violent Offence	257	91.13%
Others	25	8.87%
Penalty types		
Fixed-term imprisonment	68	24.11%
Life imprisonment	156	55.32%
Suspended death penalty	58	20.57%

**Table 2.** Correlation of Brief COPE with SCSQ

	SCSQ	
	Positive	Negative
Brief COPE		
Adaptive	.410**	.130*
Maladaptive	0.052	.384**

Note: \*\*.  $p < 0.01$

### *Exploratory Factor Analysis*

A principal component analysis (PCA) was used to conduct on the 28 items of the revised Chinese version of B-COPE with oblique rotation. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure was used to affirm the sampling adequacy for the analysis, KMO=0.748('superb' according to Field, 2009). Bartlett's test of sphericity  $\chi^2 (378) = 2741.48$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , indicating that correlations between items were sufficiently large for PCA. An initial analysis was run to obtain eigenvalues for each component in the data. Eight components had eigenvalues over Kaiser's criterion of 1 and in combination explained 61.98% of the variance. Only one item loading  $< 0.4$  (13A in "Behavioural Disengagement"), so we remove this item from the scale. Item 9A, 9B (from "Self-distraction") and 1A, 1B (from "Active coping") loaded on two different factors, according to the reliability analysis, 9B was removed and 1A, 1B were reserved. Items from Using Emotional Support, Using Instrumental Support and Venting loaded on Factor 1. Items from Positive Refraining, Planning, and Acceptance and one item from Active coping loaded on a single factor (Factor 2). Two items from Substance Use loaded on Factor 3. Items

from Denial and Self-blame loaded on Factor 4. Items from Humour formed Factor 5, and items from Religion loaded on Factor 6. Only one item from Self-Distracton loaded on Factor 7 and items from Acceptance formed Factor 8. Table 3 showed the factor loadings after rotation.

**Table 3.** Factor Ladings from exploratory factor analysis of the B-COPE

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7A	Using Emotional Support	<b>.728</b>	.059	-.106	-.166	-.050	.249	.109	.176
7B		<b>.574</b>	.008	.045	-.002	.006	.112	<b>-.460</b>	-.026
8A	Using Instrumental	<b>.619</b>	-.066	.050	.121	-.192	.074	-.212	-.131
8B	Support	<b>.430</b>	.358	-.076	-.025	-.082	.064	-.195	.018
11A	Venting	<b>.730</b>	.027	.078	.090	.101	-.156	.183	.096
11B		<b>.381</b>	.041	.330	.291	-.021	-.136	.054	-.093
1A	Active Coping	-.072	.281	<b>.533</b>	-.214	-.038	-.074	-.209	.193
1B		.095	<b>.508</b>	.020	-.207	.013	-.135	.142	.350
2A	Planning	.058	<b>.687</b>	.144	-.078	-.062	.006	-.044	-.009
2B		.042	<b>.744</b>	.039	-.080	-.096	-.032	.050	-.029
3A	Positive Refraining	-.012	<b>.714</b>	-.088	.144	.055	-.032	-.054	-.006
3B		-.020	<b>.820</b>	-.054	.158	-.041	.127	.059	-.086
12A	Substance Use	.055	-.094	<b>.854</b>	-.022	-.138	.096	.003	-.093
12B		.000	-.046	<b>.825</b>	.052	-.023	.164	-.046	-.045
10A	Denial	.187	-.025	.037	<b>.500</b>	.101	.303	.067	.140
10B		.059	.069	.112	<b>.454</b>	.287	.332	.354	.090
13A	Behavioral Disengagement	.045	-.241	.288	.195	-.097	.210	.300	.283
13B		-.020	.001	.227	<b>.445</b>	.009	-.014	.278	.098
14A	Self-blame	-.013	.132	-.045	<b>.786</b>	-.134	.017	-.141	-.088
14B		.115	-.085	-.059	<b>.680</b>	-.249	-.008	-.282	.071
5A	Humor	.054	.129	.152	.108	<b>-.777</b>	-.033	.182	.064
5B		-.025	.022	.031	.086	<b>-.848</b>	.079	.038	.084
6A	Religion	.033	-.018	.102	-.078	-.253	<b>.796</b>	-.014	-.034
6B		-.024	.086	.032	.016	.121	<b>.864</b>	-.055	.022
9B		.028	.047	.223	.250	.215	.034	<b>-.585</b>	.192
4A	Acceptance	.048	.310	-.156	-.014	-.068	-.056	-.261	<b>.480</b>
4B		-.167	.326	-.046	.034	-.146	-.061	-.321	<b>.468</b>
9A	Self-Distracton	.116	-.248	.037	.057	-.097	.085	.044	<b>.720</b>
	Eigenvalue	5.56	4.07	1.72	1.34	1.32	1.20	1.07	1.07
	Variance (%)	19.86	14.54	6.13	4.79	4.71	4.30	3.83	3.82

Although there are two subscales which has only one item, considering that the original scale has two items for each subscale and two items have similar meanings when translated into Chinese, we reserve the two subscales. Item 1A, 1B (from “Active coping”) loaded on two different factors, and they were not removed from the revised scale. Because the EFA conducted by Carver (1989), the author of the original scale, also found items from the same subscale loading on different factors. Thus, we hold that the Brief COPE structure is consistent with the original coping theory considering the culture difference and the high loading. Our final model resulted in 26 items.

### Reliability

The overall internal consistency of the Chinese Version Brief COPE was 0.84. Cronbach’s alphas for each of the subscales were acceptable to high, ranging from 0.51-0.90, shown in Table 4.

**Table 4.** Cronbach’s alphas for subscales of B-COPE

Subscales	$\alpha$
Active Coping	0.521
Planning	0.697
Positive Refraining	0.651
Acceptance	0.703
Humor	0.799
Religion	0.699
Using Emotional Support	0.608
Using Instrumental Support	0.508
Self-Distraction	0.58
Denial	0.705
Venting	0.435
Substance Use	0.895
Behavioral Disengagement	0.516
Self-blame	0.702

*Note.* Subscales only have one item was calculated by the consistency between item score and the total score.

### Discussion

This study examined the reliability and validity of the Chinese version of Brief COPE. EFA results yielded eight factors and in combination explained 61.98% of the variance. There was significant correlation between the mean adaptive (/maladaptive) coping scores of the Brief COPE and the mean positive (/negative) coping scores of SCSQ, showing high convergent validity. The internal consistency of the Chinese Version Brief COPE shows high reliability.

The study reports on a brief measure of coping reactions, based on the COPE inventory (Carver et al., 1989). The B-COPE provides an approach for researchers to assess the coping strategies in a relatively short time, especially in the special groups like prisoners and drug users, most of whom cannot finish a long test due to attention deficit (Goel, 2009; Halikas, Meller, Morse, & Lyttle, 1990; Konstenius et al., 2014; Rösler, Retz, Yaqoobi, Burg, & Retz-Junginger, 2009). Additionally, the brief COPE allows researchers to choose the scales to measure the coping strategies they are most interested (Carver et al., 1989).

Using sample of offenders has drawbacks because that the sample size is not large enough to conduct EFA and CFA at the same time. However, the strength of being a offenders sample instead of a student sample is that the group are facing much more stress from real-life. S (Carver, 1997). Subscales of Venting did not show excellent loadings, partly because that one subscale only has two items that represent similar meaning translated in Chinese, which may not describe the same intention in the original Brief COPE. However, the unsatisfying factor loadings were also found during the development of the original scale, and also found in Greek adults (Kapsou, Panayiotou, Kokkinos, & Demetriou, 2010), gay men in the U.S. (David & Knight, 2008), HIV-positive African-American mothers (Prado et al., 2004), and other samples. Therefore, a confirmatory factor analysis in the special groups is still needed to be done in the future.

Cooper et al. (2008) concluded that the subscales in B-COPE can be grouped into three categories: Emotion-focused strategies, problem-focused strategies and dysfunctional coping strategies (Cooper et al., 2008). Along with the 14 subscales, B-COPE combined main-stream coping theories and made it possible for researchers to identify the certain type of participants' coping strategy. Furthermore, B-COPE can be changed in tense to be applied in retrospective, concurrent and dispositional study (Carver, 1997). For instance, coping strategies of prisoners can be measured while they are in prison and how they coped with stress events before they commit crimes.

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## SEXUAL OFFENCES AGAINST WOMEN: VARIABLES INVOLVED IN JUDICIAL DECISION MAKING

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### Abstract

Despite the low rate of sexual assault allegations, this crime type is one of the most present in oral trials in Chile, given the seriousness of the legal right contravened. Current evidence supports the fact that extralegal factors and previous cognitive schemes might influence judges' penal decisions in this matter. Having in mind this scenario, the present study aims at identifying the criminological characteristics of sexual crimes against adult women disputed on trial, as well as the relationship between verdict and the variables of the process/victim considered conducive to or indicative of potential bias on part of the court. To accomplish such aim, we proceeded by the exhaust revision of 102 randomly selected criminal sentences of oral trials corresponding to sexual crimes against adult women between 2015 and 2016, analysing the presence and frequency of sexual assault attributes. The relationship between certain extralegal variables and the verdicts was examined by means of the Chi square association statistic and its effect size. Concerning criminological characteristics of sexual crimes, the results show a predominance of aggressions committed in the close physical and relational environment of the victim, and a low presence of genital injuries as a result. Findings also indicate the influence of some variables on sentencing outcomes, such as a prior complainant-offender relationship, as well as "negative" or counter-stereotypical victim characteristics (drug use, prostitution, social vulnerability) notoriously reducing condemnatory verdicts. When committed by strangers, on the other hand, sexual assault was associated with more condemnatory sentences. Implications of these findings are discussed in the context of criminal justice.

**Keywords:** Court decisions; extralegal factors; criminological variables; sexual aggression; adult victims

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## Introduction

Sexual violence, according to the World Health Organization (WHO, 2011, 2013), is understood as any sexual act, attempt to obtain a sexual act, unwanted sexual comments or advances, or acts to traffic or otherwise directed against a person's sexuality, using coercion, by any person regardless of their relationship to the victim, in any setting, including home and work. This represents an attack on the physical integrity and sexual autonomy (Organización de Naciones Unidas, 2010), with high prevalence rates worldwide, especially against women, according to the victimization surveys compiled by WHO (2013) and the main international organizations (Abrahams et al., 2014; Black et al., 2011; Breiding et al., 2014), producing a serious impact on the physical and mental health of victims (Campbell, Dworkin, & Cabral, 2009; Dworkin, Menon, Bystrynski, & Allen 2017).

The WHO (2013) reports a prevalence of physical and sexual violence against women throughout life around 35%, without the inclusion of sexual harassment. The victimization studies collected by this entity concerning women over 15 years, reports an average prevalence of 30% of sexual violence in the context of intimate partners and 7.2% by a non partner of the victim, the latter rising in Latin America and the Caribbean to 10.7%. It is, therefore, a significant criminal phenomenon, which mainly affects women (Black et al., 2011, Kilpatrick, 2011, Tjaden & Thoennes, 2006, WHO, 2013), even though there is an increasing number of victimization against males (Schuster, Krahe, Ilabaca, & Muñoz-Reyes, 2016).

Despite the magnitude of the sexual violence estimated through victimization surveys, a low rate of report has been found in formal instances (police and justice system) worldwide. That has been linked to the characteristics of the crime (e.g. usually in the absence of witnesses) as well as the response to sexual assaults by the justice system (mesosystem) and the general sociocultural values (macro system), such as myths about sexual aggression (Campbell et al., 2009; Smith & Skinner, 2017). It is estimated therefore that there is a high hidden figure from which only "the tip of the iceberg" is accessed (Pereda, 2006), not only lowering the report rate but also prosecution and convictions for these crimes (Brown, Hamilton, & O'Neill, 2007; Krahe & Berger, 2009; Lovett, & Kelly, 2009; Temkin & Krahe, 2008).

In Chile, similarly to the rest of the Western countries, the amount of sexual assaults that arrives to the criminal justice system is minor, not exceeding 2% of the total number of crimes prosecuted by the Public Ministry (Ministerio Público de Chile, 2011-2019). Of these, 85.2% corresponds to female victims and approximately 40% to victims over 18 years of age (Ministerio del Interior y Seguridad Pública, Centro de Estudios y Análisis del Delito, 2019).

Although a "non-judicial" outcome predominates in the cases admitted by the system (69% of the total cases of sexual crimes), sexual offences use proportionally a high percentage of the oral trials carried out in the country (approx.10% of them) given the seriousness of the legal right contravened (Ministerio Público de Chile, 2011-2019).

The decision making process in criminal justice is especially relevant for the field of sexual violence, given that particularly in this subject such a task is often conducive to the introduction of extralegal factors in reasoning (Cook & Cusack, 2010; Cusack & Timmer, 2011; Smith & Skinner, 2017). This has been linked to bias, establishment of causal links and disparity in the results, impacting the legal motivation of the sentence (Arce, Fariña, & Novo, 2004; Fariña, Arce, & Novo, 2003; Novo & Seijo, 2010).

The decision-making phase should ideally be based—through an exhaustive formal analysis—on the evaluation of legal factors (such as weight, admissibility and suitability of the presented means of proof) and proven factual propositions, without the presence of preconceived ideas to arrive to the verdict (Rúa & González, 2018). However, given the adversarial and contentious context of criminal justice in Chile, in which each party usually presents opposed case theories supported by means of proof in the direction of their own theory, the judiciary faces a complex scenario which must achieve the cognitive integration of all the information received (Coloma, Pino, & Montecinos, 2009). In addition, the decision-making process is limited by the characteristics of human cognitive functioning (Novo & Seijo, 2010), which operates from shortcuts, prejudices and cognitive schemes to accomplish a simplified and efficient management of information (Muñoz-Aranguren, 2011; Arce et al., 2004; Novo & Arce, 2003; Novo, Arce, & Jóluskin, 2003; Novo & Seijo, 2010).

These last elements - cognitive schemes and prejudices - are part of the so-called extralegal factors in the field of legal decisions, in reference to those irrelevant elements contained in judicial decisions, particularly present in this type of crime (Brown et al., 2007; Krahe & Berger, 2009, O'Neill & Spohn, 2017; Venema, 2016). An example of this is the impact of the relationship between victim and offender, since it has been found that a previous connection between the parties is associated with fewer complaints, continuity in the process, convictions and leniency in condemnatory sentences (Spohn & Holleran, 2001; Spohn & Tellis, 2012; Warner, 2000). This variable is relevant if it is considered that aggressions by known offenders represent a predominant percentage of the total, either in the context of a couple or by others acquaintances (WHO, 2013), which would occur in around three out of four cases (WHO, 2011). However, some studies such as that of Kingsnorth, MacIntosh, & Wentworth

(1999), conducted in the United States, found no significant evidence in this direction, raising doubts about the influence of this aspect. Another variable considered as mediating the criminal decision are the socially "negative" or counter-stereotypical characteristics of the victim (e.g., mental health problems, incompatibility with traditional gender attributes, drug consumer) (Grubb & Turner, 2012; Maurer & Robinson, 2008; Venema, 2016). On the other hand, cognitive schemes about sexual aggressions have led to misunderstandings and expectations about how these occur and how the victims behave during and after the events, stereotyping them, oversimplifying the information and diminishing the credibility of the victim when their circumstances, characteristics or reactions move away from the expected stereotype (Krahé & Berger, 2009). The predominant expectations of the sexual assault script usually involve a victim with serious injuries from an assault committed by an armed stranger in a dark and desolate place, reported immediately after the event (Bohner & Schapansky, 2018; Grubb & Turner, 2012; Hohl & Stanko, 2015; Temkin & Krahé, 2008; Waterhouse, Reynolds, & Egan, 2016; Wrede & Ask, 2015).

Considering the information presented, an archive study involving judicial sentences executed in cases of sexual crimes committed against adult women was designed, which aims to characterize the crimes reaching the penal instance and to know if there is any association between the verdict and the mentioned factors (i.e. complaining-accused relationship, counter-stereotypical victim characteristics, presence-absence of injuries).

## **Method**

### **Protocols**

As material of analysis, 102 randomly selected criminal sentences coming from oral trials of sexual crimes committed against women adults over 18 years old were reviewed (the sentences were executed by Chilean courts from all over the country in the years 2015-2016). In the Chilean system of deliberation each oral criminal court is composed of three members assessing the evidence of the parties under the model of "sound criticism" (Article 297 of the Code of Criminal Procedure), by the rules of logic, the lessons of experience and scientific knowledge (Maturana & Montero, 2012, Ministerio de Justicia de Chile, 2018).

As inclusion criteria for the selection of sentences, the following was considered:

1. Causes that contain at least one sexual offence punishable under the Penal Code (rape, art 361; kidnapping with rape, art 141; aggravated or qualified sexual abuse, 365 bis; sexual

abuse, 366; Theft with rape, Art. 433.1), with the exception of rape with homicide and human trafficking for sexual exploitation, excluded because of their different phenomenological and probative characteristics.

2. Victim being woman over 18 years old and male offender. Causes with more than one victim were excluded.
3. In cases additionally involving other types of crime, only the judges' sexual offence decision was considered to establish the sentence or acquittal verdict, not that of the remaining crimes (e.g., minor injuries, possession of weapons).

## Design

The sentences were classified and analysed with respect to the following variables:

- a) In relation to the general background of the crime.* Legal qualification, relationship between complainant and accused, temporal-spatial location of the assault, tactics used by the perpetrator (physical force, intimidation or psychological coercive means, temporary impairment of the victim due to deep sleep or alcohol-drug facilitated sexual assault), presence of genital and extragenital injuries, and finally, characteristics of the victims or their situation (consumption of alcohol or drugs, social vulnerability, exercise of prostitution, psychological problems) (See Table 1).
- b) In relation to procedural aspects and judicial decision.* Verdict (acquittal or conviction decision); the "theory of the case" was codified into three main categories: litigation on consent of the victim; claim of non-existence of alleged facts; and the total or partial recognition of the facts, either by confession of the author, by request on the part of the defence of reclassification of the offence (to one of lesser degree of severity), or consideration of diminished responsibility or non-criminal responsibility offender (See Table 1).

## Data analysis

The variables were analysed in terms of their presence, absence and frequency; and concerning the association between the characteristics of the crime, victims, and legal variables in their relation to the verdict (condemnation-absolution) the Chi square statistic was used, as well as the size of the effect when suited.

**Table 1.** Variables and categories used and productive in the codification process

<b>General background of the crime</b>		
	Offence by the penal Code	Violation Sexual abuse and aggravated sexual abuse Robbery with rape
	Relationship between complainant and accused	Intimate partner or ex-partner Another family member Acquaintances (i.e. neighbour, friend) Stranger
	Time of the event	Diurnal (7 am a 20 pm) Night (20 pm a 7 am)
	Place of the event (crime scene)	Complainant's residence Accused's residence Residence shared by complainant and accused Vehicle of the accused Open or public space Others
Characteristics of the crime	Offender tactic	Physical force Intimidation or psychological tactics Incapacitated victim by deep sleep or facilitated by substance/alcohol use
	Injuries (medical expert examination)	Genital injuries Extralegal injuries
	At the time of the assault	Alcohol consumption Drugs consumption (alone or combined with alcohol)
Characteristics of the victims and their situation	Counter-stereotypical associated	Social vulnerability Exercise of the prostitution (effective or insinuated by the defence) Presence of serious mental health problem
<b>Procedural aspects and judicial decision</b>		
	Consent	Litigation on consent of the victim
	Non-existence	Claim of non-existence of alleged facts
Theory of the case by the defendant lawyer	Full or partial recognition of the facts	Confession (full or partial) of the offender Request of reclassification of the crime (to one of smaller severity) by the defence. Consideration of diminished liability or non-criminal responsibility of the offender.
Verdict	Legal decision for the sexual offence	Acquittal Condemnatory

## Results

### Characterization of the cases

The sample was constituted in its legal classification by 50% ( $n = 51$ ) of rape cases, 42.2% ( $n = 42$ ) of sexual abuse and 7.8% ( $n = 8$ ) of theft with rape. If this last crime is counted as part of the category of violation, the distribution of this is 58% against 42% for sexual abuse.

Regarding the relationship between complainant and accused, 34% ( $n = 35$ ) were strangers and 66% ( $n = 67$ ) of a known offender of the complainant, 21.6% ( $n = 22$ ) were (ex) partners, 11.8% ( $n = 12$ ) relatives of the victim (brother, son, brother-in-law, etc.) and 32.4% ( $n = 33$ ) acquaintances (such as friends, neighbours, etc.).

Concerning the situational characteristics of the crime, 35% of the cases occurred in daytime (7 am to 20 pm) and the remaining 65% during the night. Regarding place, 40.4% of the times the crime was committed at the victim's home, followed by 26% at open or public spaces, 14% at the home of the defendant and 10% in a car. The crime scene has a significant association between the complainant / accused relationship (known / unknown) ( $p < .001$ ;  $V = .378$ ). More specifically, victimization by (ex) partners occurs in 55% of the aggressions at the victim's place, 18% in the residence of the defendant, and 14% in the vehicle of the aggressor. In cases involving a relative as aggressor, 92% occurred in the domicile of the victim and 8% in the defendant's vehicle. In aggressions by acquaintances, the domicile of the victim also prevails as the crime scene (40%), followed by the offender's home (21.2%), with the public way as a relevant place (20.6%), and the defendant's vehicle (9.1%) in the same proportion as other residential places (9.1%). Finally, assaults by strangers occurred preferably on public spaces (52%), followed by the residence of the victim (14%) and in similar proportion at the home of the defendant (11%), vehicle (9%) or other residential place (9%).

With regard to the offender tactics, the use of force prevails (70.6%,  $n = 72$ ) followed by incapacitated sexual assault, either by deep sleep or facilitated by substance and/or alcohol use (20.6 %;  $n = 21$ ), and lastly psychological intimidation (8.8%,  $n = 9$ ).

When the events took place, more than a third of the complainants were under the influence of alcohol (34.3%,  $n = 35$ ) and 12.7% under the effects of illicit drugs ( $n = 13$ , with 10 of them that would also have alcohol consumption). Meanwhile, 22.5% of the complainants presented some characteristics that could eventually produce negative predisposition, or which generated some complexity for their credibility in trial (prostitution, social vulnerability, mental health problems).

### Procedural variables and judicial decision

With respect to the court's decision, there were a total of 42.2% ( $n = 43$ ) of acquittals and 57.8% ( $n = 59$ ) convictions. Meanwhile, 13.7% ( $n = 14$ ) of the sentences presented an accused confessed ( $n = 12$ ) or partially confessed ( $n = 2$ ) of the crime, of which almost in its entirety condemnation was obtained (93%). If we exclude the cases involving confessed offenders, condemnations decrease to 51.2%, while acquittals increase to 48.8%, almost equating the proportion between condemnation and acquittal sentences.

Regarding the association between verdict and complainant-prosecuted relationship, it can be seen that this variable has an influence of statistical significance on the judicial decision  $\chi^2(3, N = 102) = 13,451; p = .004, V = .363$ , evidencing a relation expressed particularly in the prevalence of condemnatory sentences in cases involving an offender stranger to the victim; remaining at equivalent levels when dealing with acquaintances and (ex) partners; and showing a marked decrease in sentences when there is an intra-familiar relationship, as can be seen in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Verdict in association with complainant-offender relationship

		Judgment		Total
		Absolatory	Condemnatory	
Relationship	(Ex) partner	11 (50%)	11 (50%)	22
	Family member	9 (75%)	3 (25%)	12
	Acquaintance	16 (48.5%)	17 (51.5%)	33
	Unknown	7 (20%)	28 (80%)	35
Total		38 (42.2%)	57 (57.8%)	95

Focusing on the theory of the case as presented in trial by the defence, the majority of cases correspond to the category "Litigation on consent of the victim" with 44.1% ( $n = 45$ ), followed by the category "claim of non-existence of the alleged facts" with 35.1. % ( $n = 33$ ), and then a defence recognizing the facts, either asking to consider re-qualification of the offence or diminishing (or eluding) the responsibility of the aggressor (23.5%,  $n = 24$ ). This variable (theory of the case) had a significant association with the outcome of the trial (see Table 3).

**Table 3.** Relationship between theory of the case raised by the defence and verdict

	Judgment		Total
	Absolatory	Condemnatory	
Occurrence of the event	15 (45.5%)	18 (54.5%)	33
Consent	24 (53.3%)	21 (46.7%)	45
Total or partial recognition of the facts...	4 (16.7%)	20 (83.3%)	24
Total	43 (42.2%)	59 (57.8%)	102

Note.  $\chi^2(2, N = 102) = 8,847; p = .012, V = .295$

On the other hand, the offender tactics do not show a significant association with the verdict ( $p = .632$ ), although there is a reduction in sentences involving psychological intimidation as a mechanism to commit the crime (the condemnatory tendency is reversed here) (see Table 4).

**Table 4.** Relationship between offender tactics and verdict

	Judgment		Total
	Absolutory	Condemnatory	
Physical or use of force	29 (40.3%)	43 (59.7%)	72
Psychological intimidation	6 (66.7%)	3 (33.3%)	9
Victim incapacitated for consent*	8 (38.1%)	13 (61.9%)	21
<b>Total</b>	<b>43 (42.2%)</b>	<b>59 (57.8%)</b>	<b>102</b>

Note. \*: Victim incapacitated due to being in deep sleep or alcohol/drug facilitated assault.

Concerning the physical consequences of the assault, extragenital injuries were registered in less than half of the cases (48.4%,  $n = 46$ ), and genital injuries were present in approximately one quarter of them (26.3%,  $n = 25$ ), being mostly diagnosed as having a "mild" severity level. Neither extragenital nor genital injuries were evidenced with sufficient statistical weight as to be clearly associated with the judicial decision ( $p = .300$  and  $p = .051$  respectively), although the latter result –genital injuries statistical significance— is in the threshold to be linked to the sentence outcome. Thus, injuries do not have enough strength to control the direction of the verdict.

Regarding variables associated with the complainant, the influence of certain "socially negative" characteristics with a lower number of convictions is appreciated, especially when the complainant exhibits drug use ( $\chi^2(1) = 6,828$ ,  $p = .009$ ,  $V = .270$ ). This difference however does not reach statistical significance in the case of alcohol consumption by the complainant ( $p = .087$ ). If we include the victims' characteristics related to mental health problems, vulnerable social condition, substance consumption or prostitution (either explicit or suggested by the defence), then this variable, named counter-stereotypical victims, is strongly dependent on the result of the failure in the acquittal direction ( $\chi^2(1) = 18.441$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $V = .443$ ).

## Discussion

Concerning the characteristics of sexual assault crimes that reach criminal trials, it is possible to point out that most victims had a previous relationship with their aggressors, which is consistent with the existing literature (Krahé & Berger, 2009; Rumney, 1999; WHO, 2013). The main place of incidence is the victim's home and her immediate surroundings, being the

majority assaulted during the night. Alcohol consumption has a considerable presence in this type of crime, being therefore possible to be considered as a risk or vulnerability factor, as other epidemiological investigations have concluded (Hagemann et al., 2013; Isorna, Souto, Rial, Alías, & McCartan, 2017; Xifró et al., 2015).

Although the accusation of the victims is mostly typified as aggression by physical force, the verification of extragenital injuries is present in only half of the cases with genital injuries being even scarcer and generally of a mild severity, agreeing with other investigations such as Sugar, Fine and Eckert (2004), which contributes debunking the sexual aggression myth about expected injuries. Besides, it can be the case that genital lesions are not directly attributable to sexual violence, given the victim's condition of adult (usually involving an active sexual life, childbirths, etc.), and could eventually be explained by consensual sexual activity as pointed out by Anderson and Sheridan (2012). Although these are useful means of proof, they are not significantly nor directly linked to the verdict, implying that the decision is more complex and demands other means of proof, even more so considering that the main argument of litigation tends to be the consent of the victim.

The low number of condemnatory sentences associated with intimidation as a strategy to commit the crime shows the degree of difficulty involved when solving the consent issue in the absence of physical struggle, even though intimidation is a non-infrequent tactic. The evidence has already shown antecedents in this line (Black & McCloskey, 2013). However, the present inference cannot be generalized from this study taking into consideration of the low sample number used, and needs therefore to be examined in more detail in extended future investigations.

When letting outside cases of confessed offenders, the proportion between acquittals and condemnations in the verdict narrows considerably (52% versus 48%), demonstrating the probative difficulty of these crimes in overcoming the reasonable doubt, corroborating previous evidence (Fariña, Arce, Vilariño, & Novo, 2014; Lovett & Kelly, 2009; Temkin & Krahé, 2008). Additionally, it is important to remark that cases going to trial represent a minor percentage of the total which means they have greater probative potential, having discarded others in the process due to lack of evidence or other reasons (69% of the cases has non-judicial outcomes, roughly 7 out of 10).

In terms of procedural variables, the highest rate of convictions occurs in cases with stranger aggressors as described by previous evidence (Logan, Walker, & Cole, 2015;

Waterhouse et al., 2016), an outcome that matches expectations considering that this scenario facilitates the discarding of false allegations for personal motivations as well as it diminishes the probability of consent. Given that aggressions by strangers are the least frequent type, it is important to examine in detail the arguments that motivate acquittals in cases containing closer bonds between victim and aggressor, and if they contain any bias or extralegal factors in the decision-making process (Ben-David & Schneider, 2005).

Finally, victims exhibiting anti-stereotypical characteristics tend to be more vulnerable towards victimization, presenting at the same time less probability to reach a condemnatory verdict (Ben-David & Scheiner, 2005; Krahe 1988; Novo, Herbón, & Amado, 2016). It is therefore necessary to create instances of training directed to justice system operators concerning the heterogeneity of victims and violence dynamics in general, as well as promoting an awareness of their own prior cognitive schemes when approaching the assessment of proofs as well as their own expectations based on beliefs not established from the evidence (Du Mont, Miller, & Myhr, 2003; McEwan, 2005), in order not to "punish" the complainant for these factors nor contributing to the impunity of the crime.

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## **NOBODY IS BETTER THAN YOU: OPPORTUNISTIC MORAL IDENTITY OF SEXUAL BATTERERS**

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### **Abstract**

Modern societies devise sexual violence as a social problem. Legal psychologists highlight the importance of identifying those variables that increase the likelihood of violent behaviour occurs – risk factors- and those variables that increase their opposition to have deviant behaviours -protective factors-. For these reasons, the objective of this work is to study moral identity and moral disengagement as variables strongly related to violent behaviour, in a sample of institutionalized men (sexual offenders and intimate partner batterers) and in a sample of community men to analyse the differences between them. The sample was composed of 91 convicted and 133 community participants who voluntarily completed The Self-Importance of Moral Identity Scale and The Propensity to Moral Disengagement Scale. Variance analysis, bivariate correlations and hierarchical regressions were performed in order to analyse the differences in each of the variables between groups; to test the relationships between study variables, and to find out which mechanisms of moral disengagement are associated with both factors of moral identity in each group. Results show significant differences between groups in both factors of moral identity (internalization  $F(1, 224) = 20.72, p < .001$ ; and symbolization  $F(1, 224) = 14.52, p < .001$ ). Bivariate correlations showed relationship only between symbolization and moral disengagement in institutionalized participants and lastly, different mechanisms of moral disengagement were associated with both factors of moral identity in each group. Finally, the practical implications of these results were discussed to improve the psychological interventions with sexual offenders and intimate partner batterers.

**Keywords:** Sexual assault, Intimate partner violence, Moral identity, Moral disengagement, Risk factor

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## **Introduction**

Modern societies devise sexual violence as a social problem, which is in the cross hairs of the media, and concerns both citizens and public authorities. In Spain, the National Institute of Statistics (INE) registered 29.008 cases of women victims of interpersonal violence (with protective order or precautionary measures) during 2017. This number has increased by 2.6% compared to the previous year. In addition, the Crime Report, published by the Ministry of Interior of Spain in 2018, indicates that there has been an increase in sexual assaults with penetration of 22.7% compared to the same period of 2017.

Forensic professionals who work with these types of criminals, in the service of the courts or in prisons, face increasing pressure to effectively assess risk's levels of recidivism (Craig, Browne, Beech & Strigner 2006). Criminal psychology research highlights the importance of identifying all contextual, temperamental and sociocognitive variables that increase the likelihood of violent behaviour will occur -risk factors- and those variables that increase their opposition to have deviant behaviours -protective factors- (Lösel & Farrington, 2012). In this sense, the study of moral development in this context is of special interest, as it is already equated in the old Roman law with *dolo capacitas* or discernment (Ríos, 1977). The offenders, like the rest of the population, choose their behaviour based on their perception of available options. However, they differ from other people in perceiving certain situations, as a legitimate option and not as a sexual offence. Accordingly, one of the predictive variables with more interest for the understanding of (im)moral behaviour is moral identity (Hardy & Carlo, 2011).

Previous literature indicates that the development of moral judgment is a necessary but not sufficient condition for the maturity of moral action. Therefore, the moral identity is a construct that arises in an effort to understand this gap between judgment and moral action. Moral identity refers to the importance of morality for the self (Hardy & Carlo, 2011). This construct has motivational nature and, as Aquino & Reed (2002) indicate, it is composed of two different dimensions: one public or social (symbolization) and other private or personal (internalization). The internalization dimension affects the association strength between moral traits and self-concept. The symbolization dimension acquires a more general sensitivity to the moral self as a social object, whose actions in the world, can report that one has these characteristics. Both dimensions allow that values such as being honest, compassionate, fair and generous to be central to the definition of personal identity. For that matter, it is coherent to think that people with high scores of moral identity are often more involved in moral actions.

This statement is supported by several empirical studies and reviews, as meta-analysis conducted recently by Hertz & Krettenauer (2016), where the relationship between identity and moral action provides a moderate effect size ( $r = .22$ ).

Although moral identity has not yet been studied in sexual offenders nor in intimate partner batterers, other studies point to the opinions of individuals and their behaviour do not necessarily concur (Batson, 2011). Individuals may be wrong about what really defines or matters to them. In addition, they may want to create a moral identity to leave a fair impression on others. Hence, moral identity and real behaviour would be widely disengaged (Vecina & Marzana, 2016). Thus, some studies have shown that individuals are mainly motivated to maintain a positive moral identity, while avoiding the costs of behaving morally (Batson, Thompson & Chen, 2002).

This moral opportunism could be facilitated by one of the social-cognitive variables strongly related to antisocial and violent behaviour, the moral disengagement (Bandura, 1986, Moore, Detert, Treviño, Baker & Mayer, 2012). Bandura (1986) indicates that the moral agency, as an internal system of behaviour self-regulation, could be activated mainly in two ways: preventing the individual from engaging in violent behaviour - in order to avoid cognitive dissonance and negative self-sanctions - or disengaged morally to favour their engagement in them through justifications that make those behaviours reprehensible, socially acceptable and fair (Fuik, 2014). Consequently, moral disengagement is a mechanism that takes place when moral self-sanctions are disabled, resulting in the disinhibition of violent behaviours and terrible acts against others.

This moral disengagement occurs through eight cognitive mechanisms, which in turn are grouped into four major categories (Bandura, Barberanelli, Caprara, & Pastorelli, 1996). Firstly, individuals would change their perceptions of victims, blaming it either for causing reprehensible behaviour, or for dehumanizing it in some way (Hymel, Schonert-Reichl, Bonanno, Vaillancourt & Rock Henderson, 2010). Secondly, another category allows individuals to misrepresent or ignore the damaging consequences of the act. Thirdly, individuals can minimize their role of agent over behaviour, shifting responsibility to a third party or spreading responsibility for a larger group or context. Finally, in the latter category, individuals can cognitively restructure reprehensible behaviour (Risser & Eckert, 2016).

For the aforementioned reasons, the aim of this work is to study moral identity and moral disengagement in a sample of institutionalized men (sexual offenders and intimate partner

batterers) and in a community sample to analyse the differences between them. Thus, we firstly hypothesize, that men institutionalized for sexual crimes will have higher scores in identity and moral disengagement than non-institutionalized men; secondly, that the relations between both independent variables will be greater in the group of institutionalized participants; and, thirdly, that the moral disengagement's mechanisms used to preserve the moral identity in both groups will vary between groups.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

The sample of this work was composed of two groups of participants, institutionalized and non-institutionalized.

The institutionalized sample was composed of 91 men, coming from all the Correctional Centres of the Autonomous Community of Galicia, aged between 18 and 75 years ( $M = 43.24$ ,  $SD = 11.23$ ). From all of them, 32 were convicted of sexual assault and 59 for intimate partner violence. The majority were Spanish (72%), and they indicated a medium-low academic level (64.3% primary). Likewise, intentional sampling was used to form this sample.

The non-institutionalized sample was composed of 133 men, from Pontevedra (54.1%), Lugo (21.8%), A Coruña (18.8%) and Ourense (5.3%) and aged between 18 and 75 years ( $M = 42.24$ ,  $SD = 10.75$ ). Regarding their academic level, 19.5% had done primary, 30.1% secondary, 27.1% professional training and 23.2% university studies. In addition, incidental sampling was used to form this sample.

### **Measurements**

**Moral Identity.** The first measure was The Self-Importance of Moral Identity Scale. This 10-item scale (Aquino & Reed, 2002) was designed to measure moral identity or the degree to which individuals' self-concepts focus on moral traits. The scale consists of two subscales: Internalization, or the degree to which private views of oneself are focused on moral traits; and Symbolization, or the degree to which moral traits are reflected in the individual's actions in the world. Participants were given a list of nine moral traits (e.g., caring, fair, hardworking) and were asked to rate the extent to which they agree/disagree with statements regarding these traits using a 7 point scale. A sample item for the Internalization subscale is "Being someone who has these characteristics is an important part of who I am" and for the Symbolization subscale

is “The fact that I have these characteristics is communicated to others by my membership in certain organizations.” This instrument showed an acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha for Moral Identity of .66, and for Internalization and Symbolization of .55 and .65 respectively.

**Moral Disengagement.** The Propensity to Moral Disengagement Scale (Moore et al., 2012) has been used 24-item scale to assess the mechanisms of moral disengagement developed by Bandura et al. (1996). Respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they agree or disagree with each statement. The items were assessed on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from “Disagree strongly” to “Agree strongly.” Sample items include “it is alright to fight to protect your friends,” and “if people are living under bad conditions, they cannot be blamed for behaving aggressively.” This instrument showed an acceptable internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha for moral disengagement of .81.

### **Ethical Procedures**

Ethical standards were ensured to shield rights of confidentiality, voluntariness and anonymity of the people surveyed.

Specifically, in order to work with institutionalized sample, the standards collected by the Ministry of the Interior of Spain were followed in order to access the centres.

All the participants signed the informed consent before their collaboration, where they were explained that to leave the study did not have any type of drawback. In this way, all procedures in accordance with institutional standards were respected.

### **Data analysis**

Data analyses were conducted on IBM SPSS Statistics 23, and Mplus v.7 was used for the analyses of structural equation modelling. Firstly, one-way ANOVAs were performed to analyse the differences in all the study variables explained by (non) institutionalization. Secondly, correlation analyses were used to assess the associations among the study variables. Thirdly, hierarchical regressions were performed to find out which mechanisms of moral disengagement are associated with both factors of moral identity in each group.

## Results

Table 1 shows descriptive statistics including means and standard deviations, internal consistency of each of the scales, as well as the results of ANOVAs for each of the variables. The results show no significant differences between both groups, institutionalized and non-institutionalized participants, in moral disengagement scores. However, the differences between groups in the internalization and symbolization of moral identity variables have been significant. This is, institutionalized participants have higher scores than non-institutionalized participants in internalization  $F(1, 224) = 20.72, p < .001$  and symbolization  $F(1, 224) = 14.52, p < .001$ . These scores can be observed in figure 1.

**Table 1.** Descriptive results of all study variables explained by groups

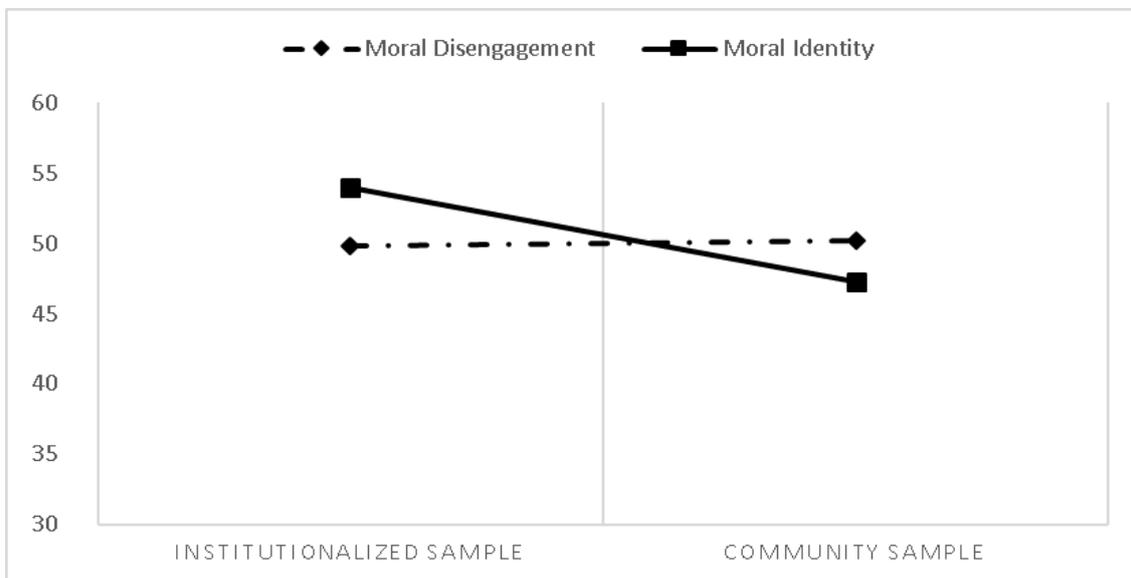
	Institutionalized Males	Community Males	$\alpha$	$F$	$\eta_p^2$
	$M(SD)$	$M(SD)$			
Moral Disengagement	50.47 (15.18)	49.93 (11.96)	.81	.09	.00
Moral Justification	6.83 (3.28)	6.25 (2.49)	.60	2.24	.01
Euphemistic language	6.69 (2.86)	7.71 (2.64)	.63	1.67	.00
Advantageous comparison	5.18 (2.31)	5.48 (2.37)	.59	.82	.00
Displacement of responsibility	6.84 (5.18)	5.87 (2.48)	.38	3.52	.01
Diffusion of responsibility	5.90 (2.80)	6.15 (2.15)	.55	.59	.00
Distorting consequences:	7.37 (2.21)	7.53 (2.24)	.05	.27	.00
Attribution of blame	6.03 (2.75)	5.38 (1.42)	.40	5.33*	.02
Dehumanization:	5.51 (2.88)	6.05 (2.51)	.66	2.36	.01
Moral identity symbolization	16.91 (4.53)	14.96 (2.93)	.65	15.13***	.06
Moral identity internalization	21.50 (3.32)	19.77 (2.84)	.55	17.38***	.07

Note. \*  $p < .05$ , \*\*  $p < .01$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .  $\eta_p^2$  = partial eta squared effect size.

The differences in the scores of moral disengagement and moral identity in the group of institutionalized participants were also analysed, according to the criminal typology, but not finding significant differences between the scores provided by the participants convicted of sexual offences and intimate partner violence  $p > .05$ .

Table 2 shows correlations between moral disengagement and both factors of moral identity, internalization and symbolization for each group. In the group of non-institutionalized

participants, the relationships of moral disengagement have been significant with both factors, while in the group of institutionalized participants it has only been related to the symbolization.



**Figure 1.** Normalized scores in moral disengagement and moral identity obtained in both groups.

**Table 2.** Results of the correlation analysis between all variables in both groups

	1	2	3
1. Moral Disengagement			
2. MI. Symbolization			
Institutionalized	(.21**)		
Community	.18*		
3. MI. Internalization			
Institutionalized	(-.26)	(.30**)	
Community	-.20*	.25**	

*Note.* The coefficients in brackets correspond to institutionalized males and the coefficients without brackets correspond to non-institutionalized males. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 3 shows a multiple regression model for each group, through which it can be known which mechanism of moral disengagement is most strongly associated with each factor of moral identity. This table reveals the standardized correlation coefficients ( $\beta$ ) as well as the scores obtained in the model comparison *test t*.

**Table 3.** Predictive moral disconnection mechanisms in the hierarchical regression analysis on internalization and symbolization of moral identity

<i>Institutionalized sample</i>			
	$\beta$	$t$	$R_2$
<i>Symbolization</i>			
Moral Justification	.25	2.45*	.05
<i>Community sample</i>			
	$\beta$	$t$	$R_2$
<i>Internalization</i>			
Diffusion of responsibility	-.42	-4.57 ***	.08
Displacement of responsibility	.34	3.74***	.16
Dehumanization	-.19	-2.37*	.19
<i>Symbolization</i>			
Moral Justification	.20	2.38*	.05
Dehumanization	.20	2.37*	.08

Note. \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$

Through each hierarchical regression, low but significant portions of variance can be found in the prediction of moral identity since all  $R_2$  oscillate between the values .05 and .19 (for non-institutionalized participants). Moral justification is the common mechanism of moral disengagement in both samples for the symbolization of moral identity. The internalization of the moral identity in the community population can be explained to a greater extent by the mechanism of dehumanization.

### Discussion

The purpose of this work was to study the gap between judgment and moral action through the study of moral identity, in a context in which previously it had not been evaluated: the prison context. In particular, the differences between institutionalized and non-institutionalized men have been studied, with a view to finding out the functional value of preservation of positive moral identity in each sample. Likewise, moral disengagement has been considered to explain the possible discrepancies between identity and moral behaviour. This approach allows us to connect results from two separate fields, moral and criminal psychology, to improve the psychological interventions that deal with this type of aggressors. However, it is necessary to highlight some limitations that must be considered when interpreting and generalizing the results. Firstly, the data have been obtained exclusively through self-reports that, in the case of this sample, may present certain distortions in the results such as the Rosenthal effect or a certain social desirability (the extreme cases were controlled). Secondly,

the generalization of these results to other contexts must be taken with certain precautions given the peculiarities of the evaluation context: prison inmates. Thirdly, this study assumes a linear relationship between the study variables and criminal behaviour, but it is not necessarily the only one.

Extending this logic, in relation to our first hypothesis, the results have confirmed higher scores in moral identity in the institutionalized population than in the community population. The literature indicates that usually institutionalized participants have a low self-concept, strongly associated with low social competence. Several studies, which have manipulated experiences of institutionalization, have shown that people have negative emotional reactions when they think they have performed poorly (Kernis, Grannemann, & Barclay, 1989). Although our results seem a priori contradictory to the previous literature, these findings are consistent with the theory of moral compensation (Zhong, Liljenquist, & Cain, 2009). This theory proposes that moral (or immoral) behaviour can result from an internal balance between the moral identity of the individual and the cost inherent to prosocial behaviour. In this way, people with a low moral identity increase the motivation to act prosocially (Monin & Miller, 2001; Sachdeva, Ilic & Medin, 2009), while feeling relatively moral reduces the motivation to act prosocially (allowing in certain circumstances, produce moral licenses that lead to reprehensible acts). These results are particular interest in this study context, since previous high scores in this construct had been identified as a protective factor or promoter of prosocial behaviours, especially in community populations (Aquino & Reed, 2002). However, these results may also indicate that, in certain people and in certain contexts, high scores can function as a risk factor in a double sense: facilitating that certain behaviours are perceived legitimate as "moral licenses" and as a predictor of poor initiative for change (Albarracín & Wyer, 2000).

Besides that, although higher scores on moral disengagement were found in the group of institutionalized participants, these differences have not been significant with respect to the scores obtained in the group of non-institutionalized participants. This suggests that both groups use these cognitive strategies to disassociate from moral standards, once they have performed behaviours that, based on them, would be reprehensible.

Regarding our second hypothesis, the results have shown different associations between moral disengagement and moral identity. The moral disengagement has been significantly and positively related to the symbolization of moral identity in both samples. According to these results, it could be said regardless of the institutionalization, that people

strive to preserve and improve positive concepts of themselves before others. Moreover, they can do this by behaving in a moral way, or by cognitive skewing their world concepts through these cognitive mechanisms (Jordan, Mullen, & Murnighan, 2011).

The internalization of the moral identity has been negatively and significantly related to the moral disengagement only in the sample of non-institutionalized participants. These results indicate that in the community sample, repeated use of the mechanisms of moral disengagement to convert the reprehensible behaviours into justifiable ones, is associated with a lesser importance for oneself and behaving as a moral person (Albarracín & Wyer, 2000). However, moral disengagement in the institutionalized population has not had significant relationships with the internalization of moral identity. These findings are consistent with the theory of moral hypocrisy, which does not assume the optimistic assumption that individuals are motivated to achieve moral integrity, but that they are motivated to appear moral in the eyes of others, avoiding the cost of be moral. In this way, the benefits to oneself of moral hypocrisy are obvious: to obtain the material rewards of acting selfishly and to obtain the social rewards of being seen and seeing oneself as honest and moral. These results have some relevance for the treatment of this sample, because the problem is not only that the moral motivation is weak - counteracted by situational pressures or by the use of mechanisms of moral disengagement - but the goal is not really to be moral, only see oneself and be seen by others as moral (Batson 2011; Jones & Pittman, 1982).

In addition, it is important to highlight the cognitive strategies used by both groups to reduce the cognitive dissonance between identity and (in) moral behaviour. In the group of non-institutionalized participants, moral identity has been associated with the mechanisms of perceptions' change about victims (dehumanization), minimization of the agent's role (diffusion and displacement of responsibility) and with the cognitive restructuring of one's own harmful behaviour (moral justification). In the group of institutionalized participants, only the cognitive restructuring of the harmful behaviour has been used. Based on these results, the non-institutionalized population needs to use more diversity of cognitive strategies to reduce the cognitive, affective and anticipatory guilt reactions that arise before the offence.

Finally, it is worth mentioning the need to evaluate moral development in general and moral identity, particularly, in the prison inmates. Specifically, an excessive moral identity can act a risk factor in the motivation for change when making interventions with these offenders. For this reason, one cognitive-behavioural training program is recommended due to their effectiveness, Moral Recognition Therapy (Ferguson & Wormith, 2013; Little & Robinson,

1988). This program works around integrated and structured packages of skills or abilities train based on the protection or risk factors that have been considered (not evidence-based) or observed (evidence-based) that characterize antisocial or criminal groups versus normalized ones.

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## INTIMATE PARTNER BATTERERS: IRRATIONAL BELIEFS, DISTORTED THOUGHTS AND CONCEALMENT

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### Abstract

Irrational beliefs and distorted thoughts among batterers are highly prevalent and associated with the initiation and maintenance of intimate partner violence. However, when assessing this construct in such populations, it is necessary to suspect an attempt to distort the responses, bearing in mind that they may be more accessible to those assessed when identifying socially desirable responses. The aim of this study is to determine the impact of intervention on irrational beliefs and distorted thoughts of intimate partner batterers and controlling the strategies of distortion of the responses towards concealment, in a sample of 141 convicted male batterers who complete a community intervention in the Galician programme for gender aggressors. In order to ascertain the prevalence of these beliefs, the Questionnaire of irrational beliefs and distorted thoughts on the use of violence, gender roles and partner relationships (Arce & Fariña, 2005) was applied to participants in pre and post intervention conditions, as well as a protocol for monitoring the validity of responses. The results show a large and statistically significant effect of intervention on the reduction of irrational beliefs on the use of violence, gender role and emotional dependence. However, by incorporating as covariate the scores obtained in the L Scale of the MMPI-2, the multivariate results lose significance and, at the univariate level they reflect that the reported changes in beliefs about gender roles and use of violence are not statistically significant, so that the intentional distortion of their responses is observed, and the lack of validity of the results when concealment is not taken into account.

**Keywords:** Irrational beliefs, intimate partner batterers, community treatment, concealment, intimate partner violence.

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## Introduction

Irrational beliefs are cognitions that reveal erroneous forms of reality interpretation, and have a high prevalence among offenders and aggressors (Beck, 1999; Hutchings, Gannon, & Gilchrist, 2010; Maruna & Mann, 2006). These beliefs contribute to minimizing both responsibility and consequences arising from violent behaviour, commonly through justifications used as defence strategies or mechanisms (Martín-Fernández et al., 2018), supporting the manifestation of and persistence in violent behaviours (Hutchings et al., 2010; Maruna 2004; Novo, Fariña, Seijo, & Arce, 2012).

This type of strategy, closely linked to irrational beliefs related to the use of violence, is referring to the fact of minimising the severity of the harm induced as well as the number of violent episodes, in addition to not assume the consequences of their violent behaviour on their victims (Arce & Fariña, 2006). In that way, aggressors tend to justify their behaviour through the elaboration of cognitions as “what happened has no importance”, “it wasn’t severe” or they may even fully deny the violence (Edin, Lalos, Högberg, & Dahlgren, 2008). In addition, the tendency to externalize the responsibility leads to the transfer it to the victim becoming the perpetrator and provocateur of the abuse, or to other external factors such as stress, or substance abuse (Loinaz, Marzabal, & Andrés-Pueyo, 2018).

Instead, these types of distortions are often related to sexist content, referring to the inequalities between men and women and the power imbalance that appears in the couple’s relationship, with a clear rejection of egalitarian attitudes and approaches, which represents a risk factor for committing violent behaviours (Arce, Fariña, & Novo, 2014). Likewise, irrational beliefs related to the dominant emotional dependence on the aggressors are differentiated, which originate in the perception of a superior position associated with a deep need and control of the partner (Arias, Novo, Fariña, & Arce, 2017). Some of the characteristics of emotionally dependent people are fearful of abandonment and rejection, difficulties in controlling anger, and other negative emotions, (Bornstein, 2012) as well as high levels of jealousy and possessiveness. The jealousy is sustained by erroneous or distorted thoughts about what should be a romantic relationship based on the desire of possession, and they tend to present intrusive and ruminative thoughts and to cause maladjustment behaviours, based on a selective, and therefore erroneous, perception of reality (Loinaz et al., 2018). This implies that a high level of emotional dependence makes the aggressor tries to maintain the relationship by all means (Henning & Connor-Smith, 2011), which means a significant increase in the risk of abusive behaviours (Moral, García, Cuetos, & Sirvent, 2017).

All these irrational beliefs, whose essential nature is inflexibility, are presented with a higher prevalence in intimate partner batterers (Arias et al., 2017; Gilchrist, 2007). Scientific research has been consistent in reporting distortions about sexual roles and the use of violence as an effective method to solve conflicts in aggressors. In addition to this and to the use of strategies to avoid assuming responsibilities, in the assessment of sentences offenders under treatment, defensiveness responses must be suspected as a significant decrease in their irrational beliefs and distorted thoughts is linked to penitentiary/clinical benefits or release (Arce, Fariña, Seijo, & Novo, 2015). Therefore, styles of response are an aspect that should be considered prior to intervention with intimate partner batterers (Arce & Fariña, 2010). Hence, a field study was raised with the aim of knowing the direct effects of an intervention on the distorted beliefs that surround the use of violence, gender roles and romantic relationship, which is the usual evaluation of the clinical intervention with batterers, and then, to know if those effects are maintained in time when controlling the defensive response of the batterers involved.

## Method

### Participants

The sample was composed by 141 primary batterers sentenced by intimate partner violence, serving on probation and participating in a re-educative program (Ley 1/2004). The age of the sample is between 19 and 73 years ( $M = 40.18$ ,  $SD = 10.37$ ).

All of them completed this judicial measure under the *Galicia Programme for the Re-education of Gender Batterers* (Arce & Fariña, 2006, 2010). The 97.2% of the sentences corresponded to suspensory measures, lasting between 2 and 5 years ( $M = 2.54$ ,  $SD = .73$ ), while the remaining 2.8% were alternative measures that implied the obligation to complete the intervention in addition to the rest of imposed measures (v. gr. Community services).

### Measurement instruments

The participants completed the pre- and post- intervention the *Irrational Beliefs and Distorted Thoughts Questionnaire on the Use of Violence, Gender Roles and Relationship (Emotional Dependence)* (Arce & Fariña, 2005). This instrument is formed by 45 items classified in three different dimensions: use of violence, the female role in the couple and in other areas of life, and the couple's relationship (dominant emotional dependence) (Arias et al., 2017):

- Distorted thoughts and beliefs about violence: the 15 items in this dimension refer to the use of violence, its justification and the lack of knowledge of its consequences.
- Distorted thoughts and beliefs about female roles: this dimension consists of 16 items related to stereotypical beliefs about the role of women or couples in the different areas of life.
- Distorted thoughts and beliefs about a couple relationship (dominant emotional dependence): globally, the 14 items of this dimension are referred to beliefs or thoughts about how relationships should be, usually characterized by an insane feeling of possessiveness with jealousy, frequently pathological, which denote both the necessity and the suspicion towards the person they attack.

In order to answer to this scale, convicts must indicate the degree of agreement, on a four-point Likert scale, on a series of sentences referring to distorted thoughts around the three dimensions: 1) use of violence ( $\alpha = .86$ ); 2) the role of women in the couple and in other areas of life ( $\alpha = .82$ ); and 3) couple's relationships (dominant emotional dependence) ( $\alpha = .74$ ). The global reliability for the scale was .92.

To control the distortion in the answers, due to the accessibility of the content of each item, which in this specific context is related to the intention to show a positive image, the L Scale (Lie) from the MMPI-2 (Hathaway & Mckinley, 1999) was used as covariate. This scale controls the validity of the protocol. It is composed of 15 items and it was created to verify the degree in which a person tries to manipulate his/her responses trying to show a positive self-image (defensiveness). In order to do this, the content of the items refers to socially accepted behaviours, nevertheless which, overall, are unusual for most people. In this sense, significantly high scores would be indicative of intentional contamination of the responses by showing that the person is trying to give a positive image of his/herself and moral characteristics and a psychological adjustment that do not fit with reality. As the authors point out, it is important to have general information about the subject's history and background, which in this particular context are oriented towards a (dis)simulating tendency.

### **Data analysis**

A data analysis design was implemented with a mean test with repeated measures. Firstly, a MANOVA for one sample with two measures (pre- and post-treatment) was performed. For the study of the intervention effects a repeated measures MANCOVA was

performed in the intervention factor (pre- vs. post- treatment) about the irrational beliefs and distorted thoughts, having as covariate the L-scale of the MMPI-2. For the multivariate  $F$  we took the Pillai-Bartlett trace, as it is more robust for the heterogeneity of variances and the violation of multivariate normality, with the exception when the groups differ just in one variable, using for these the Roy's largest root test, as it has more power and it reduces the Type II error (Olson, 1979). For the interpretation of the effect sizes the technique of Vilariño, Amado, Vázquez, & Arce (2018) was followed: transformation of the effect size into percentiles and interpretation of the magnitude is interpreted in terms of percentage superiority over the total of possibilities.

### **Ethical considerations**

The data were treated guaranteeing the convicts' rights that are prescribed by the Ley General Penitenciaria of 1979 and following every judicial guarantee. Furthermore, every canon established by the Organic Law 15/99 on the Protection of Personal Data were followed.

### **Results**

The MANOVA results showed a significant multivariate effect for the intervention within factor (pre- vs. post-intervention),  $F(3, 125) = 68.65, p < .01$ , with an effect size more than large,  $\eta^2 = .622$ , and with a 100% power,  $1 - \beta = 1$ . Overall, the intervention with the batterer not only results directly effective for the irrational beliefs and distorted thoughts, but also the magnitude is so high that it is higher than the 96.56% of the potential effects of the intervention, and the 93.12% of the interventions with positive effects.

The univariate effects (see Table 1), show a significant effect for the intervention in the dimensions that conform the irrational beliefs and thoughts. Thus, in the "Use of violence" dimension we observe a reduction post-treatment with an effective rate higher than the 96.33% of every possible one and that the 92.6615 of every intervention with positive effects. In the "Female role" dimension the magnitude for the intervention is higher than the 76.73% of every possible and the 56.46% of the interventions with positive effects. Finally, the efficacy of the "Dominant emotional dependence" dimension is higher than the 83.65% of the possible ones and the 67.3% of those with positive effects. In sum, the efficacy of the intervention is extraordinarily effective for the cognitive control of the use of violence against the partner and more than good on the assumption of the gender role and the loss of the emotional dependence (efficacy rate of 56.46% and 67.3% over the 100%, respectively).

**Table 1.** Univariate effects on the irrational beliefs and distorted thoughts for the intervention factor. Within effects.

Variable	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$	1- $\beta$	<i>M</i> <sub>pre</sub>	<i>M</i> <sub>post</sub>
Use of violence	203.340	.000	.616	1.000	21.73	10.66
Female Role	33.822	.000	.210	1.000	9.93	5.83
Dominant emotional dependence	60.567	.000	.323	1.000	13.62	7.77

Note. *df* (1,127); *M*<sub>pre</sub>= pre-intervention mean; *M*<sub>post</sub>= post-intervention mean.

However, these efficacy rates contradict the results obtained in the meta-analytic reviews about the intervention with batterers assessed as the recidivism rate in intimate partner violence both in Official Records and in Couple Reports, which establish a small effect size (reduction in the recidivism rate between the 5 and 20% in the Official Records) or null in the Couple Reports, and no generalizable for all interventions (Arias, Arce, & Vilariño, 2013; Babcock, Green, & Robie, 2004, Feder & Wilson, 2005). Consequently, the measure variable of the intervention is deficient in terms of validity (it does not measure reliably the efficacy of the intervention) and/or it is subject to a systematic measurement error (i.e., the variance is due to the method, not the construct assessed) (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003). In the context of aggressor's assessment who are serving a sentence, a defensiveness response bias should be suspected (Arce, Fariña, Seijo, et al., 2015; Novo et al., 2012).

As for this, a MANCOVA was performed with the intervention factor (pre- vs. post-intervention) on irrational beliefs and distorted thoughts, with the defensiveness (MMPI-2' *L* Scale) as covariate. The results revealed a significant multivariate effect for the interaction between the intervention factor (pre- vs. post-intervention) and the defensiveness (covariate),  $F(3, 124) = 3.11, p < .05, 1-\beta = .713$ . In contrast to the more than large effect size for the intervention factor (MANOVA) on the irrational beliefs and distorted thoughts, the magnitude of the effect size was medium,  $\eta^2 = .070$  i.e., higher than 64.80% of all the potential effect sizes and higher than 29.6% of all the positive ones, and the post-hoc power of the results, poor ( $1-\beta < .80$ ).

The univariate effects (see Table 2), controlling the effect of defensiveness (covariate), showed that the intervention did not have a significant effect neither in the "Use of violence" nor the "Female role". However, the intervention does have a significant effect, with a moderate magnitude,  $\eta^2 = .056$ , in controlling the "Dominant emotional dependence", as the effect size is larger than the 63.68% of every possible ones and the 27.36% of the positive ones.

**Table 2.** Univariate effects on the irrational beliefs and distorted thoughts for the intervention factor (within effect) eliminated the effect of the defensiveness (covariate)

Variable	<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>	$\eta^2$	1- $\beta$	<i>M</i> <sub>pre</sub>	<i>M</i> <sub>post</sub>
Use of violence	0.028	.867	.000	.053	21.73	10.66
Female Role	1.817	.180	.014	.267	9.93	5.83
Dominant emotional dependence	7.508	.007	.056	.776	13.62	7.77

Note. *df*(1,126); *M*<sub>pre</sub>= pre-intervention mean; *M*<sub>post</sub>= post-intervention mean.

## Discussion

The presence of irrational beliefs around violence, female roles and couple's relationships significantly interfere, in case of the intimate partner batterers, with the learning of alternative behaviours to violence (Sonkin, Martin, & Walker, 1985). In fact, to facilitate recidivism and to inhibit the assumption of responsibility and the change of future behaviour (Daly & Pelowsky, 2000), due to the centrality, rigidity and the amount of these beliefs (Gilchrist, 2007), which, in turn, are mediated by toxicity and resistance to intervention (Arias et al., 2013; Gilchrist, 2007; Maruna, 2004).

Nevertheless, the results in this study inform that the responses of the batterers are not a valid method of measuring the efficacy of the intervention as being biased by defensiveness. However, the interventions designed for the treatment in this population must include the eradication of these thought distortions among its objectives (Chereji, Pinteá, & David, 2012). Neither is possible to contrast the stage of pre-intervention batterers (where there is no suspicion of defensiveness) with the general population because this type of beliefs is also present in the general population (Valle & Moral, 2018). Nonetheless, the assessment of these irrational beliefs and distorted thoughts becomes mandatory, prior to intervention with batterers, as they are a reliable indicator for the resistance to the intervention (Arce & Fariña, 2010; Novo et al., 2012). Therefore, it is necessary to know the pre-intervention stage and for this reason, the distribution of the construct in this measure could be taken as a contrast criterion. A first option to study their sensitivity and specificity would be to take the lower limit of the probable error of the mean of the distribution corresponding to the 25th percentile. As far as post-intervention evaluation is concerned, the control of defensiveness in responses can be addressed with the forensic technique of Arce, Fariña, and Vilariño (2015), which correctly classifies a rate higher 92% of non-defensiveness responses. Complementary and as a guarantee measure, the assessment should also include adherence and implication for treatment (Henning, Jones, & Holdford, 2005). In pre-intervention assessment, it would also be convenient to control potential cases of exaggeration of irrational beliefs and distorted thoughts. In fact, it is known

that convicted in the initial evaluation phase are presented cases of exaggeration of damage. Once again we should resort to forensic assessment techniques that classify the exaggeration of damage (Arce, Fariña, & Vilariño, 2015; Vilariño, Fariña, & Arce, 2009).

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## BELIEFS ABOUT INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE: GENDER AND GENERATION EFFECTS

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### Abstract

The purpose of the current study is to examine beliefs about intimate partner violence (IPV) in a sample of the Portuguese general population, by comparing the level of IPV legitimization between men and women and analyzing how it varies with age. We also intend to explore if gender differences in beliefs about IPV are influenced by a generation effect. A total of 2.029 participants, 953 male (47%) and 1076 female (53%), aged 18 to 100 ( $M=37.76$ ;  $SD=18.18$ ), selected by convenience sampling, responded to the Scale of Beliefs about Marital Violence (ECVC; Machado, Matos, & Gonçalves, 2007), a Portuguese self-report scale on beliefs about IPV. Results confirmed that men have significantly higher levels of IPV legitimization than women and that IPV legitimization rises from younger to older generation groups. More interestingly, we found that generation interacted with gender on the level of IPV legitimization. In all generation groups men had significant higher scores than women, except for the generation of women over 68 – the oldest - who had similar levels of IPV acceptance than those of men from the same generation group. Findings show that we can be optimistic about the social evolution of beliefs on IPV, but shed light on how older women can be particularly vulnerable to victimization, thus reinforcing the importance of targeting IPV prevention by gender and generation. Higher awareness may not be enough to counteract the rise in IPV statistics, but works in favour of an increased reporting, gradually giving voice to a once silent crime.

**Keywords:** Intimate Partner Violence, Beliefs, Gender, Generation

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## Introduction

It is recognized that intimate partner violence (IPV) is one of the most common forms of interpersonal violence around the world. IPV is usually defined as any type of violence or abuse, attempted or perpetrated by a man or a woman on the person with whom he/she has or had a relationship (Baldry, 2003), which may occur in current or past, heterosexual or homosexual relationships (Saltzman, Fanslow, McMahon, & Shelley, 2002). While some studies have provided evidence that women perpetrate significantly more IPV than men (e.g., Thornton, Graham-Kevan, & Archer, 2010), others stand for the assumption that women tend to be the main victims of severe violence and suffer much more physical and psychological violence than men (Baldry, 2003; Kroop, Hart, & Belfrage, 2005; O'Leary et al., 1989; Walker, 1989). As such, it is unlikely not to address gender issues when addressing IPV.

In order to understand gender and violence, it is necessary to include perspectives that incorporate different dynamics of power, such as the complexity of individual, situational, cultural and social factors (Connell & Messerschmidt, 2005; Vieraitis, Kovandzic, & Britto, 2008). Theories that focus on violence of men towards women explain IPV with historical, social, cultural and political structures that legitimize violence through male control and dominance, which thrive in societies that promote gender inequalities and tolerance towards the ill-treatment of women. Beliefs that violence towards woman is legitimate and acceptable thus grow in patriarchal cultures in which men are expected to dominate women and they are easily learned during socialization by exposure to gender-role models marked by masculine superiority. Not surprisingly, studies among the general population have shown that men endorse more beliefs favorable to IPV than women (e.g., Carlson & Worden, 2005; Machado, Martins, & Caridade, 2014), findings which might reflect such genderized socialization practices.

Evidence also shows that batterers tend to endorse beliefs that legitimate IPV (e.g., Graham-Kevan, 2007) and these have been found to be powerful predictors of IPV (e.g., Capaldi, Knoble, Shortt, & Kim, 2012). Generally, IPV offenders have traditionalist conceptions of marriage (e.g., believe in the traditional family and the strict division of roles and tasks between genders) (Rider, 2005). They attenuate IPV, implicitly or explicitly, by fostering patriarchy, misogyny, and/or the use of violence to solve conflicts. Using such cognitions, IPV offenders, as other violent offenders, minimize violence, deflect personal responsibility, and deny involvement (Dutton & Kropp, 2000). These attitudes and beliefs are associated with an increased risk of violence (Hanson & Wallace-Capretta, 2004), as well as

reluctance to voluntarily cease violent behaviour or to integrate treatment programs (Hanson & Wallace-Capretta, 2004; Shepard, Falk, & Elliott, 2002).

Not only the behaviour of offenders, but also victims, can be shaped by their beliefs, which in turn are influenced by family members, friends, and neighbours (Carlson & Worden, 2005). Female victims may share beliefs of tolerance or acceptance towards IPV, which is thought to put them at more risk for victimization (e.g., Machado, Santos, Graham-Kevan, & Matos, 2017; Santos, Matos, & Machado, 2017). The beliefs of elderly victims can be particularly influenced by traditional values (Band-Winterstein, 2015), which they learned about marriage, family and gender roles (Band-Winterstein, & Eisikovits, 2010). In older generations, females were taught to be submissive to males, such as their husbands (Straka, 2006), accepting them, maintaining privacy on family matters and a high degree of commitment and loyalty, despite the violence experienced (Band-Winterstein, 2015, Band-Winterstein, & Eisikovits, 2010).

In the last years, significant efforts have been made to raise awareness and end violence towards women. The battle for gender equality has been developing in the legal and social arenas. As a result, it would be expected that younger generations – in particular, young women - are less tolerant toward IPV when compared to older generations (e.g., Martinez & Khalil, 2017).

In Portugal, like in other countries, IPV was a hidden reality for many years. Keeping silent was the norm among victims, families and bystanders. With social and legal developments, the reality of IPV has become more visible and people are more aware of the need to report and this crime and prevent victimization. In Portugal, it is estimated that 19% of ever-partnered women aged 18–74 years have experienced intimate partner physical and/or sexual violence at least once in their lifetime and 5% in the last 12 months (Un Women, 2016). In 2017, Portugal was ranked at 19 in the Gender Inequality Index (UNDP, 2018) and, in 2018, at 37 in the Global Gender Gap Index (World Economic Forum, 2018).

Focusing on IPV of men towards women, the purpose of the current study is to examine beliefs about IPV in a sample of the Portuguese general population, by comparing the level of IPV legitimization between men and women and analyzing how IPV level of legitimization varies with age. According to previous evidence, it is expected that men endorse more beliefs that legitimate IPV than women (e.g., Carlson & Worden, 2005) and that the level of IPV

legitimization is positively correlated with age. (e.g., Martinez & Khalil, 2017). We also intend to explore if gender differences in beliefs about IPV are influenced by a generation effect.

## Method

### Participants

The sample was composed by 2.029 participants from the general population, 953 male (47%) and 1076 female (53%), aged 18 to 100 ( $M=37.76$ ;  $SD=18.18$ ), selected by convenience sampling.

### Measures

Participants were asked to respond to the tool Scale of Beliefs about Marital Violence (Escala de Crenças sobre Violência Conjugal - ECVC; Machado, Matos, & Gonçalves, 2007), a Portuguese self-report scale to assess beliefs about IPV composed by 25 items scored 1 to 5 in a Likert scale (*totally disagree* to *totally agree*). Results are grouped in four factors: 1) Legitimizing and trivialization of minor violence (e.g., insulting, slapping) – 16 items; 2) Legitimization of violence by women's conduct (e.g., unfaithfulness, being a bad wife) – 10 items; 3) Legitimization of violence by its attribution to external causes (e.g., alcohol consumption, financial difficulties) – 8 items; and 4) Legitimization of violence by the preservation of family privacy (e.g., what goes on between a couple only concerns the couple) – 6 items. In the current study, Cronbach's alphas were good to excellent for the total scale (.94) and the four factors (.93, .89, .84, .80, respectively). Total scores can range from 25 to 125 points. The higher the scores obtained on the ECVC, higher the levels of IPV legitimization.

### Procedure

Data was collected between 2010 and 2017. Participants were approached on the street, in universities and other public or private institutions and surveyed face to face after signing an informed consent. All ethical principles were attended in accordance to the sensitive nature of the data involved.

## Results

In order to characterize beliefs about intimate partner violence, Table 1 presents the mean ECVC scores obtained by the total sample. Results show that the total mean score is below the scale middle point, thus showing a low prevalence of beliefs that legitimize IPV in

the current sample. Looking at Factors 1 and 2, mean scores are above the middle point of the scale, evidencing a highest prevalence of legitimization and trivialization of minor violence and legitimization of violence by women's conduct, respectively. Factors 3 and 4 mean scores (legitimization of violence by its attribution to external causes and legitimization of violence by the preservation of family privacy) mean scores are around the middle point of the scale.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics for ECVC Scores in the total sample (N=2.029)

	<i>M(SD)</i>	Range
ECVC Factor 1	37.76(18.18)	16-80
ECVC Factor 2	27.41(11.52)	10-50
ECVC Factor 3	16.15(7.46)	8-40
ECVC Factor 4	12.36(6.10)	6-30
ECVC Total	45.79(17.12)	25-125

*Notes.* ECVC Factor 1 = Legitimization and trivialization of small violence; ranges from 16 to 80. ECVC Factor 2 = Legitimization of violence through women's conduct; ranges from 10 to 50. Factor 3 - Legitimization of violence by its attribution to external causes; ranges from 8 to 40. ECVC Factor 4 - Legitimization of violence through the preservation of family privacy; ranges from 6 to 30. ECVC Total ranges from 25 to 125.

Comparing the mean ECVC scores between male and female participants shows that men have significantly higher levels of IPV legitimization than women (Table 2). Legitimization of violence by the preservation of family privacy (Factor 4) were the beliefs with the highest effect size, followed by total ECVC score, the legitimization of violence by women's conduct (Factor 2), legitimizing and trivialization of minor violence (Factor 1) and legitimization of violence by its attribution to external causes (Factor 3).

**Table 2.** Descriptive Statistics and t-test results for ECVC Scores by Gender

	Male	Female		<i>Cohen's d</i>
	<i>M(SD)</i>			
ECVC Factor 1	29.37(11.17)	25.68(11.55)	$t(1990) = 7.22; p = .00$	.34
ECVC Factor 2	19.21(7.22)	16.78(7.49)	$t(2004) = 7.39; p = .00$	.34
ECVC Factor 3	17.04(5.75)	15.37(6.29)	$t(2007) = 6.19; p = .00$	.27
ECVC Factor 4	13.47(4.75)	11.37(4.85)	$t(2014) = 9.78; p = .00$	.44
ECVC Total	48.87(16.28)	43.08 (17.39)	$t(1978) = 7.61; p = .00$	.34

*Notes.* ECVC Factor 1 = Legitimization and trivialization of small violence; ranges from 16 to 80. ECVC Factor 2 = Legitimization of violence through women's conduct; ranges from 10 to 50. Factor 3 - Legitimization of violence by its attribution to external causes; ranges from 8 to 40. ECVC Factor 4 - Legitimization of violence through the preservation of family privacy; ranges from 6 to 30. ECVC Total ranges from 25 to 125.

Analyzing how IPV level of legitimization varies with age we found significant positive correlations between age and ECVC scores. The highest correlation was found for Factor 4 ( $r=.40, p=.00$ ), followed by Total Score ( $r=.39, p=.00$ ), Factor 1 ( $r=.38, p=.00$ ), Factor 3 ( $r=.36, p=.00$ ) and Factor 2 ( $r=.36, p=.00$ ).

Due to the cultural nature of IPV related beliefs and the occurrence of key social developments that are expected to have raised awareness across generations, we regrouped participants according to the generation of birth. Participants were then grouped into four generations according to age at time of data collection: 1) Millennials (aged 18 to 33) (N=1063, 504 male and 559 female); 2) Generation X (aged 34 to 48) (N=424, 200 male and 224 female); 3) Baby boomers (aged 49 to 67) (N=360, 175 male and 185 female); and 4) veterans (aged 68 and over) (N=182, 74 male and 108 female).

Significant differences were found between all four groups in the expected direction (Table 3): All mean ECVC scores rose from younger to older generation groups. Highest effect size of generation was found for ECVC total score, followed by Factor 4, Factor 3 and Factor 1 and Factor 2. Post-hoc tests showed that veterans had consistently significantly higher means than all other age groups in all ECVC scores. For Factors 1 and 3, only millennials and generation X had no significant mean differences. Millennials did not differ significantly of generation X on Factors 1, 2 and total scores. Generation X did not differ significantly of baby boomers on Factor 2. Mean Factor 4 scores differed significantly among all generations.

**Table 3.** Descriptive Statistics and ANOVA results for ECVC by Generation

		<i>M(SD)</i>									
ECVC	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Total						
Generation X	25.08(9.52) <sub>a</sub>	16.46(6.39) <sub>a</sub>	15.00(5.18) <sub>a</sub>	11.24 (4.18) <sub>a</sub>	42.22(14.18) <sub>a</sub>						
Generation Y	25.93(10.63) <sub>a</sub>	17.13(6.72) <sub>a,b</sub>	15.32(5.54) <sub>a</sub>	11.95(4.42) <sub>b</sub>	43.61(15.65) <sub>a</sub>						
Babyboomers	28.58(11.85) <sub>b</sub>	18.42(7.57) <sub>a,c</sub>	16.58(6.46) <sub>b</sub>	12.93(5.06) <sub>c</sub>	47.28(17.62) <sub>b</sub>						
Veterans	41.82(12.61) <sub>c</sub>	27.22(7.89) <sub>d</sub>	24.04(5.77) <sub>c</sub>	18.72(4.79) <sub>d</sub>	68.50(17.32) <sub>c</sub>						
ECVC	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Total						
Source	$F(3, 572.84)$	$F(3, 583.07)$	$F(3, 585.196)$	$F(3, 588.01)$	$F(3, 572,81)$	$\eta^2$	$\eta^2$	$\eta^2$	$\eta^2$	$\eta^2$	$\eta^2$
Generation	100.83*	103.20 *	132.49 *	132.89	126.54*	.17	.16	.17	.18	.19	.19

*Notes.* Factor 1 = Legitimization and trivialization of small violence; ranges from 16 to 80. Factor 2 = Legitimization of violence through women's conduct; ranges from 10 to 50. Factor 3 - Legitimization of violence by its attribution to external causes; ranges from 8 to 40. Factor 4 - Legitimization of violence through the preservation of family privacy; ranges from 6 to 30. Total ranges from 25 to 125. Means with different superscript letters, within the same column, are significantly different from each other (Tamhane,  $p < .050$ ). Welsh and Tamhane statistics were computed due to heterogeneity of variances.

To explore a possible interaction effect between gender and generation on IPV legitimization levels, we ran Two-Way ANOVA's for each of the ECVC Scores (total and four factor) (Table 4). We found significant main effects of gender and generation for all ECVC scores. With effect sizes ranging from .17 to .19, generation consistently showed higher effect sizes than gender.

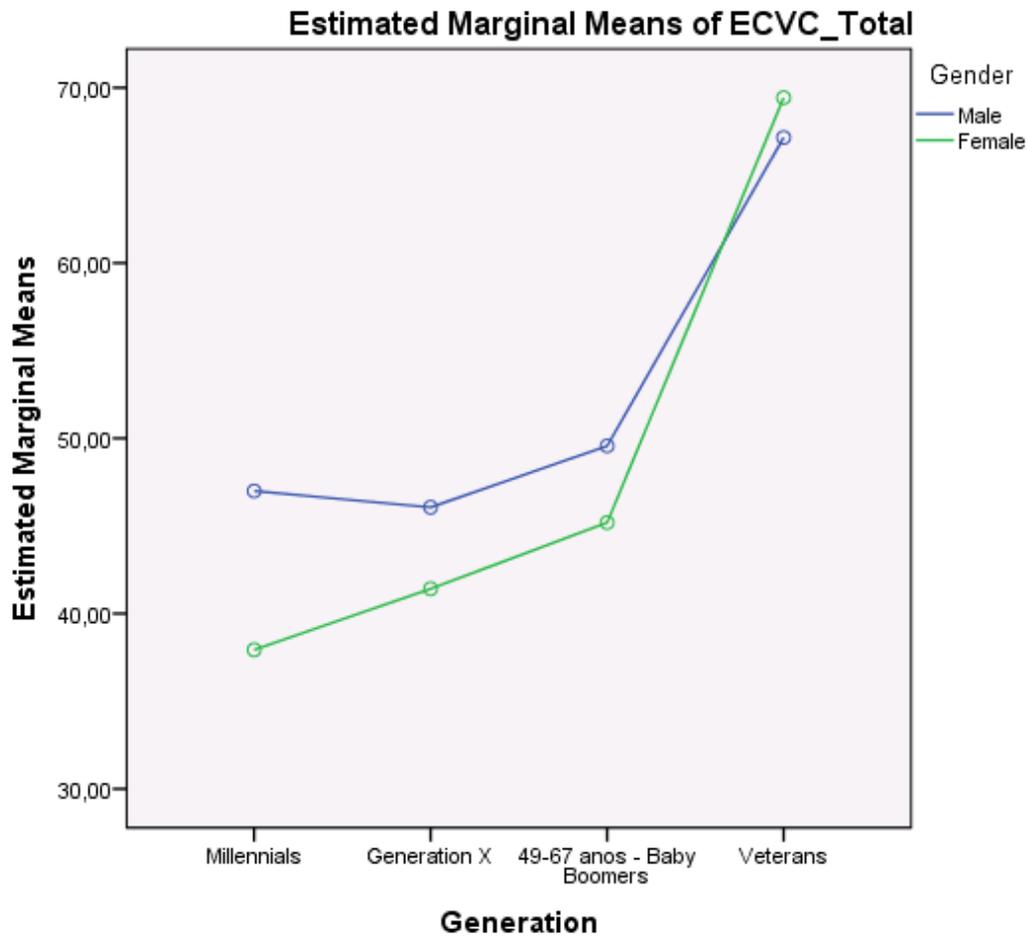
**Table 4.** Two-Way ANOVA for the Effects of Gender and Generation on each ECVC Scores

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	$\eta_p^2$
ECVC	Intercept	1232465.72	1	1232465.72	11708.41	.00	.86
Factor 1	Gender	1915.69	1	1915.69	18.20	.00	.01
	Generation	42377.22	3	14125.74	134.19	.00	.17
	GenerationxGender	2600.54	3	866.85	8.23	.00	.01
	Error	207579.27	1972	105.26			
	ECVC	Intercept	524912.37	1	524912.37	11784.76	.00
Factor 2	Gender	916.41	1	916.41	20.57	.00	.01
	Generation	17535.10	3	5845.03	131.23	.00	.17
	GenerationxGender	979.45	3	326.48	7.33	.00	.01
	Error	87836.05	1972	44.54			
	ECVC	Intercept	419240.19	1	419240.19	14023.52	.00
Factor 3	Gender	358.43	1	358.43	11.99	.00	.01
	Generation	12051.11	3	4017.04	134.37	.00	.17
	GenerationxGender	687.28	3	229.09	7.66	.00	.01
	Error	58953.93	1972	29.90			
	ECVC	Intercept	251611.11	1	251611.11	13607.74	.00
Factor 4	Gender	805.74	1	805.74	43.58	.00	.02
	Generation	8375.86	3	2791.95	150.10	.00	.19
	GenerationxGender	409.64	3	136.55	7.38	.00	.01
	Error	36462.85	1972	18.49			
	ECVC	Intercept	3393242.53	1	3393242.53	15012.68	.00
Total	Gender	5201.76	1	5201.76	23.01	.00	.01
	Generation	102372.51	3	34124.17	150.97	.00	.19
	GenerationxGender	5785.91	3	1928.64	8.53	.00	.01
	Error	445721.59	1972	226.02			

Notes. ECVC Factor 1 = Legitimization and trivialization of small violence. ECVC Factor 2 = Legitimization of violence through women's conduct. Factor 3 - Legitimization of violence by its attribution to external causes. ECVC Factor 4 - Legitimization of violence through the preservation of family privacy.

We also found significant interaction effects between gender and generation on all ECVC scores. Figure 1 illustrates this result for ECVC total scores. Significantly higher scores were found for men than women among the millennials ( $M=46.99$ ;  $SD=14.91$  for male;  $M=37.93$ ,  $SD=11.97$  for female;  $t(940.79)=10.73$ ,  $p=.00$ ), generation X ( $M=46.06$ ;  $SD=14.00$  for male;  $M=41.41$ ,  $SD=16.73$  for female;  $t(48)=3.03$ ,  $p=.003$ ) and baby boomers ( $M=49.56$ ;  $SD=16.96$  for male;  $M=45.9$ ;  $SD=18.00$  for female;  $t(348)=2.33$ ,  $p=.02$ ). However, among

veterans, no significant differences were found between male and female participants ( $t(178) = -.86, p=.39$ ). So, mean score differences between men and women became less evident as generation increased, to the point of no difference being found on IPV legitimization levels between genders on the older generations. This pattern of results was replicated for all ECVC scores.



**Figure 1.** Two-Way ANOVA Profile Pilot for ECVC Total Score

### Discussion

The current study aimed to examine beliefs about intimate partner violence in a sample of the Portuguese general population. We found globally low levels of beliefs favorable to IPV, with legitimization of minor violence and legitimization of violence through the women's conduct being the most prevalent.

We aimed to compare the level of IPV legitimization between men and women and analyze how IPV level of legitimization varies with age. Results confirmed our hypothesis that men have significantly higher levels of IPV legitimization than women (e.g., Carlson &

Worden, 2005; Machado et al., 2014). The most significant difference was related to the legitimization of violence by the preservation of family privacy, more endorsed by men than women. The (higher) level of IPV endorsement by men is still cause for concern as a potential risk factor.

In accordance to our second hypothesis, significant positive correlations were found between age and ECVC scores. As age increased, so did ECVC scores, so older people tend to be more tolerant to IPV and young people less endorsing of such beliefs (e.g., Martinez & Khalil, 2017). By showing the highest correlation with age, legitimization of violence by the preservation of family privacy may be more culturally imbibed than the other types of beliefs.

Analysis by generations, as expected, confirmed that all mean ECVC scores rose from younger to older generation groups. More interestingly, we found that generation interacted with gender on the level of IPV legitimization. More specifically, only the generation of women over 68 seems to have levels of IPV acceptance similar to those of men. Since then, from one generation to the next, women seem to be distancing themselves from men, becoming progressively less tolerant to IPV. Despite previous evidence that gender stereotypes remain unchanged (Haines, Deaux, & Lofaro, 2016), younger generations find IPV less tolerable than older generations and women seem to be becoming particularly critical. Findings provide support to the cultural nature of beliefs about IPV and shed light on how older women can be particularly vulnerable to victimization.

IPV interventions and evaluations must take into account, mainly the causes and not just the symptoms. In order to evaluate, it is necessary that the researchers who work in this area have a contextualized and historical view of the reality of victims and offenders, namely the broad knowledge of the social and affective support network available, their resources, the beliefs and attitudes about violence, among others. Thus, it is important to have an ecological view of this criminal reality and modifying policies to improve support and efforts to change social and cultural norms, to change cultural beliefs and values that involve gender roles and power relations in the family.

One of the limitations of this research was the use of a self-reporting tool. Since IPV is often considered a “private” issue, it is easy that people feel vulnerable enough to provide private information. The sampling method did not assure the representativity of the study sample as a whole, nor the generation groups. Future researchers should attempt to draw a generalizable sample that can provide additional support for the current findings, as well as the

use of self-report measures for the study of IPV beliefs. Following other studies (e.g., Martinez & Khalil, 2017), cross-cultural studies with data from other countries could add an interesting approach to the current research problems.

Despite the limitations, the results do provide important contributions to the field. Results show that we can be optimistic about the social evolution of beliefs on IPV and reinforce the importance of targeting IPV prevention by gender and generation (Nam, Lloyd & Vega, 2015). Higher awareness may not be enough to counteract the rise in IPV statistics, but works in favour of an increased reporting, gradually giving voice to a once silent crime.

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## ANALYSING THE PATH FROM BULLYING TO BULLY

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### Abstract

Traditionally, the study of bullying has focused on the roles of aggressor and victim. However, in recent years the overlap between them has gained importance. This is because those who exercise both roles are those who suffer the most serious consequences. In this way, this document aims to analyse this problem in a sample of 120 participants (66 men and 54 women), aged between 10 and 12 years ( $M = 11.18$ ,  $SD = .449$ ). To measure school bullying, the UPF-4 scale is used in two conditions: victim and aggressor. Descriptive analysis of frequencies is carried out; distinguishing by roles and types of harassment; and the overlap is studied through contingency tables. The results obtained shows relatively low rates of victimization for the harassment exercised (4.17%) and received (8.33%), as well as for the overlap (4.17%). By typologies, the highest prevalence corresponds to relational harassment, while the least frequent is physical harassment. Regarding the overlap between the role of victim and the role of aggressor, its existence is confirmed for psychological harassment, relational harassment and exclusion. Taking into account the limitations, the results obtained in relation to prevention in intervention are discussed.

**Keywords:** bullying, overlap, victim, aggressor

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## Introduction

Bullying can be defined as a repeated and deliberate form of aggression that presents differential criteria for other violent behaviours (Arce, Velasco, Novo, & Fariña, 2014; Olweus, 1993; Smith & Brain, 2000). It refers to repeated and prolonged behaviours carried out with the intention of causing harm within an asymmetric relationship (Arce et al., 2014). For such violence to be considered harassment, a process of victimization must take place (Novo, Seijo, Vilariño & Vázquez, 2013; United Nations, 1988; Vilariño, Fariña & Arce, 2009). According to the literature, different forms are distinguished such as physical harassment behaviours (Gladden, Vivolo-Kantor, Hamburger, & Lumpkin, 2014), psychological (Novo, Fariña, Seijo, & Arce, 2013), verbal (Gladden et al., 2014) and relational (Gladden et al., 2014); although they can also be differentiated into direct harassment, which would include the physical, psychological and verbal; and indirect harassment, referred to the relational (Crick & Grotpeter, 1995).

Cause the absence of a consensual definition or the variability of the type of measure be used, which in some contribute to raising or decreasing the tendency to respond positively, such as the explicit mention of the phenomenon being measured (Modecki, Minchin, Harbaugh, War, & Runions, 2014; Zych, Baldry, & Farrington, 2017), it is difficult to establish the prevalence of the phenomenon. However, the data indicate a prevalence of 3.8% (Díaz-Aguado, Martínez, & Martín, 2013) to 9.3% in traditional bullying or 6.9% in cyberbullying (Save the Children, 2016). Also, the studies show that the age range in which there is a greater incidence of harassment is located in 10-12 years (Garaigordobil, & Oñederra, 2008), remaining fairly stable in subsequent years (Defensor del Pueblo, 2007; Del Barrio et al., 2008; Serrano & Iborra, 2005).

Regarding possible gender differences, statistics shows that victimization reaches 10.6% of girls for bullying situations and 8.3% in cyberbullying, compared to 8% and 5.3% of the boys, respectively (Save the Children, 2016). Regarding the differences according to the typologies, the boys suffer more frequently physical aggressions, while the girls reflect an increase in relational bullying (Baldry, Farrington & Sorrentino, 2017; Smith, 2014).

The relevance of this problem is evident given the seriousness of the consequences that are generated in the short and long term in all the agents involved, such as psychological, relational and behavioural problems (Fariña, Arce, Vilariño, & Novo, 2014; Farmer et al., 2015; Golmaryami et al., 2016; Randa, Reynolds, & Nobles, 2019). In support, both meta-analytic reviews find a relationship between participating in situations of bullying, either as a victim or

as an aggressor, and suffering from various psychological, psychosomatic, substance use and physical health problems; as well as social dysfunctions and problems in the academic field (Corrás et al., 2017; Gianluca & Pozzoli, 2009; Holt et al., 2015; Moore et al., 2017). In addition, the consequences of bullying include antisocial behaviour (Beckley et al., 2018; Hoffman, Phillips, Daigle, & Turner, 2017). Precisely, a meta-analytical review based on longitudinal studies has shown that having been immersed in bullying processes acts as a predictor of delinquency in later stages, thus constituting an important risk factor for it (Ttofi, Farrington, Lösel, & Loeber, 2011). So, research shows that a high percentage of perpetrators have passed through, in turn, processes of victimization (Walters & Espelage, 2018). In this sense, it is argued that the overlapping of roles can originate in the existence of an initial victimization, before which the individual who suffers respond by assuming the behaviours of those who have been victims and performing them in turn, so becoming aggressor, but without discarding his initial role (Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005).

Given its relevance, many investigations examine the genesis and maintenance of violent behaviour, revealing an overlap between the roles of different actors, particularly between the victim and the aggressor (DeCamp & Newby, 2015). In this line, the consequences of victim-aggressor overlap can be very harmful (Save the Children, 2016; Tobin, Schwartz, Gorman, & Abou-ezzeddine, 2005), rather than those linked to each of the roles separately (Nansel et al., 2001; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005). Among them, mention should be made of social imbalance and isolation (Ireland and Power, 2004; Moreno, Estévez, Murgui, & Musitu, 2009), anxiety (Graham, Bellmore, and Mize, 2006), low self-esteem and depression (Kaltiala-Heino, Rimpelä, Rantanen, & Rimpelä, 2000; Moreno et al., 2009), suicidal ideation (Holt et al., 2015), behavioural disorder (Kokkinos & Panayiotou, 2004) and tobacco consumption (Weiss, Mouttapa, Cen, Johnson, & Unger, 2011). Regarding the scope in the case of bullying, the research emphasizes the relationship between overlap in different forms of bullying and school contextual factors, even after controlling risk factors at the individual level (Bradshaw, Waasdorp, & Johnson, 2015).

The present study aims to contribute to a greater knowledge of bullying and, more specifically, to analyse the overlapping of roles between the victim and the aggressor, so that it can serve as a basis for the design and implementation of prevention and intervention programs. Bullying, which address this phenomenon from a global perspective with the ultimate goal of improving the psychological, social and relational well-being of all the agents involved in the school context.

## Method

### Participants

This study used an accidental sample of 120 participants (66 men and 54 women), aged between 10 and 12 years ( $M = 11.18$ ,  $DT = .449$ ), students of the last year of Primary Education in a centre of the province of A Coruña.

### Design and procedure

We set out a descriptive study with the objective of analysing the prevalence and superposition of roles in school bullying. In order to obtain the sample, the authorization of the school was processed and the consent of the parents and of the minors was accepted to participate in the study. The instruments were administered collectively by trained personnel and during school hours. The UPF-4 scale was applied in two measurements. In the first one, the minors responded in the condition of victimization received. Between one week and 10 days, taking into account the effect of the forgetting curve (Fariña, Arce, Vilariño, & Novo, 2014; Monteiro, Vázquez, Seijo, & Arce, 2018) the second measure was applied, in that they were given response instructions for the condition of victimization exercised. All the participants fulfilled both conditions, responding to the instrument individually, voluntarily and anonymously.

### Measuring Instruments

Besides, to the sociodemographic variables, as a measure of school bullying, the UPF-4 scale was used (Arce et al., 2014). This scale consists of 26 items arranged on a five-point Likert scale (1=never or almost never happens to me, 2=once a month, 3=two or three times a month, 4=once a week; 5=several times a week) in which the frequency with which they have suffered the harassment behaviour and the duration of the harassment is reported ("one month", "three months", "six months", "one year or more"), which make up a total of 4 factors: psychological harassment, physical harassment, exclusion and relational harassment. This scale is a measure of self-report that has been designed including the differential criteria of bullying of other antinormative behaviours that occur in the school setting.

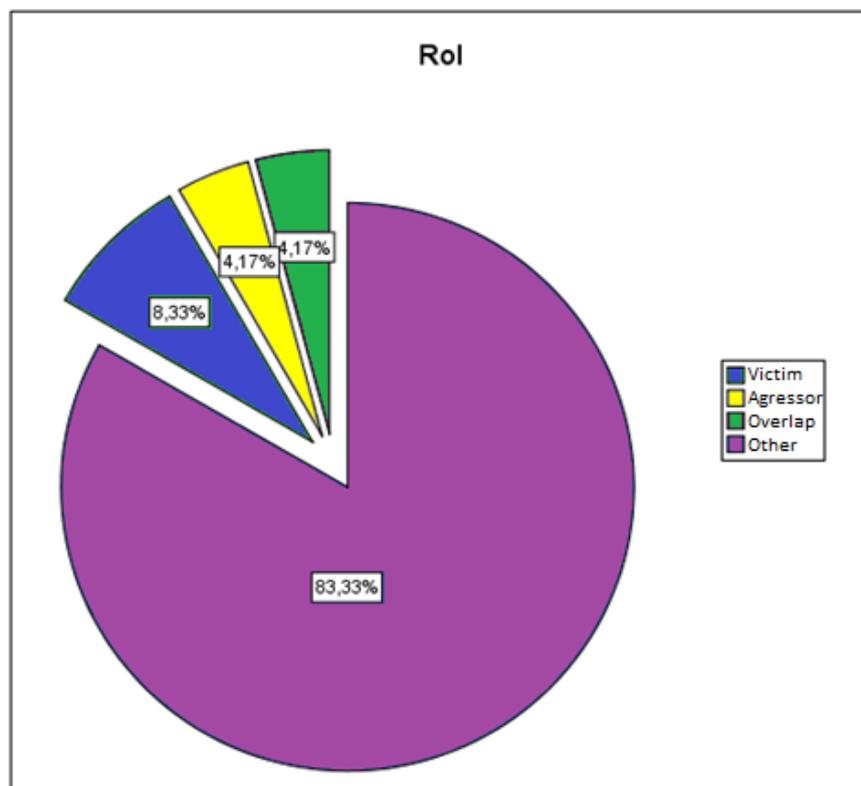
### Data analysis

A descriptive analysis of frequencies was performed to estimate the prevalence in each condition. For the detection of cases of bullying, the forensic use criteria (duration and frequency) were used, and the direct scores obtained in the School Bullying Scale UPF-4 (Arce

et al., 2014) were classified, obtaining a classification of the sample into two groups: victimization exercised / received from school bullying (positive values) vs. no victimization exercised / received. The study of the overlap between the condition of victimization exercised and received was estimated from 2x2 contingency tables. Phi was taken for the calculation of the effect size.

## Results

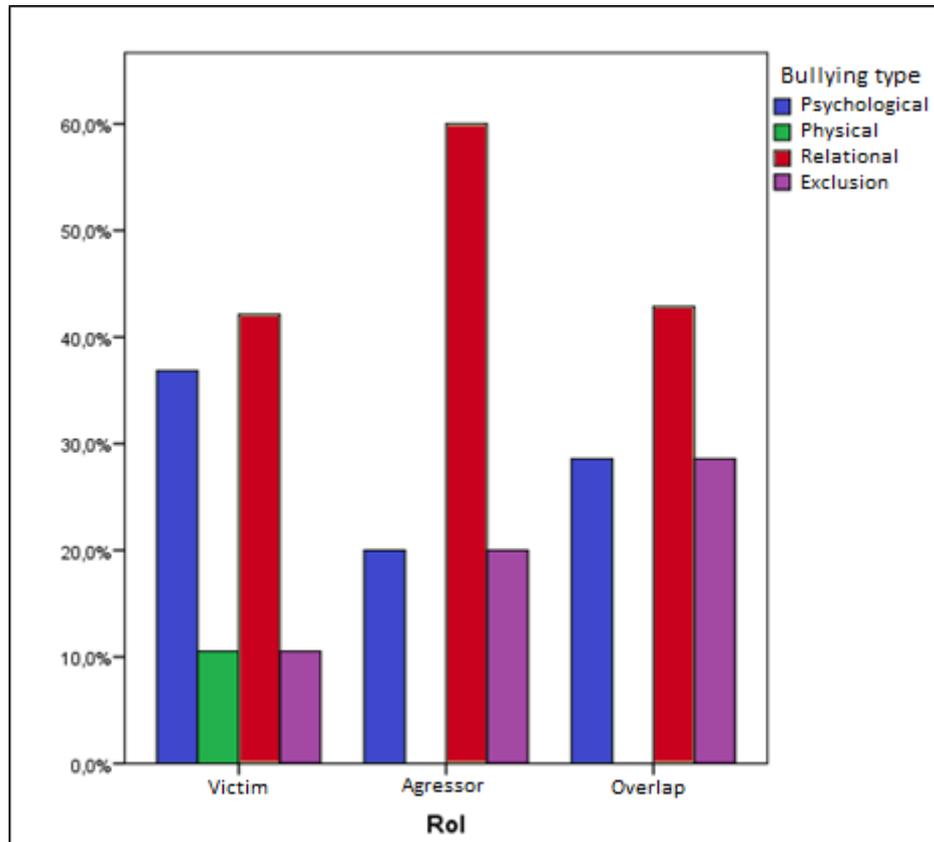
Applying the defining criteria of bullying, the prevalence of victimization received in our sample amounted to 8.33%, while the victimization exercised reached 4.17% of aggressors. Regarding the superposition of the roles of victim and aggressor, we find an identical percentage to the latter of participants who play both roles (see Figure 1).



**Figure 1.** Roles distribution

Regarding the type of harassment differentiated according to the role, it is verified that the victims mostly refer to relational harassment, followed by psychological harassment. As far as aggressors are concerned, relational harassment is also the most reported, and physical harassment is not reported. Attending to the superposition of roles (category "overlap"), it can be verified that this phenomenon occurs in the types of psychological harassment, harassment,

relationship and exclusion. On the contrary, this does not occur in physical harassment (see Figure 2).



**Figure 2.** Roles distribution by type of bullying

At a descriptive level, the existence of this overlapping of roles is corroborated, so that this category can be analysed in more depth. Our results reveal a statistically significant association between the roles of victim and aggressor for the three factors: relational harassment,  $\chi^2(1, N = 120) = 6.83, p < .01$ , psychological harassment,  $\chi^2(1, N = 120) = 10.77, p < .001$ , and exclusion,  $\chi^2(1, N = 120) = 27.97, p < .001$ . Regarding the effect size of this relationship, measured through phi correlation, it is weak,  $\phi = .238, p < .01$ , in the first case and moderate in the last two,  $\phi = .300$ , for psychological harassment,  $\phi = .483$ , for exclusion.

### Discussion

In the first place, we must point out the limitations of our results regarding the reduced size and homogeneity of the sample; as well as the use of a self-report measure, which limits the scope and generalization of results. Additionally, results may be biased by common source of error i.e., a tendency to hide both perceived and received victimization by respondents (Arce, Fariña, Seijo, & Novo, 2015; Fariña, Redondo, Seijo, Novo, & Arce, 2017). That is, variance

may be explained in part not by the measured construct but the measurement method. Taking into account these limitations, we will comment on the results obtained.

The main objective of the present study was to analyse the prevalence of the victimization exercised and received, as well as the presence of an overlap between the roles of victim and aggressor, taking into account the different types of victimization. Our results show that, applying the defining criteria of school bullying, the prevalence of school bullying is in line with the most conservative statistics reported in our country, around 3.8% (Díaz-Aguado et al., 2013)

Regarding the distribution by types of harassment, it can be observed that this does not occur in only one way, but that different typologies are represented. Likewise, these do not develop in isolation, but rather they occur in conjunction, according to what is referred to in the literature (Bradshaw et al., 2015). However, it is worth noting the higher prevalence of relational harassment compared to the rest of the types, followed by psychological harassment, which would include different verbal aggressions, whether direct (e.g., insults, taunts) or indirect (e.g., comments to other comrades), corroborating previous studies (Jansen et al., 2012; Wang, Iannotti, & Nansel, 2009). With respect to harassment through exclusion, it is close to psychological harassment. Finally, regarding physical harassment, this is the least prevalent, coinciding with the findings of other studies conducted in our country (Sánchez-Queija, García-Moya, & Moreno, 2017).

In relation to physical harassment, it is interesting to mention that it is only referred by the victims. Thus, given the impossibility of having victims without aggressors, it is necessary to consider why these results occur. A possible explanation of them passes through the Theory of moral disconnection (Bandura, 1999), which refers to the deactivation -partial or total- of the cognitive system in charge of the moral regulation of behaviour. According to the literature, this occurs in various types of violence, among which is bullying (Wang, Ryoo, Swearer, Turner, & Goldberg, 2017), registering a high level of moral disconnection both in the aggressors (Gini, 2006) as between those who assume the double role victim-aggressor (Obermann, 2011). In this line, the absence of an adequate moral judgment on violent acts implies that they are not considered as harmful (Pornari & Wood, 2010). Thus, there would be an underrepresentation of the aggression behaviours issued, which would not only affect physical harassment, but could be minimizing the results in the other types: although a greater relationship has been found between the moral disconnection and the direct behaviours of

harassment (explicit violence), as opposed to indirect behaviour (e.g., exclusion) (Bjärehed, Thornberg, Wänström, & Gini, 2019), this is present in all types (Kokkinos & Kipritsi, 2018)

Regarding the analysis of the overlap, a relationship was found between the performance of the roles "victim" and "aggressor" for the factors of psychological harassment, relational harassment and exclusion. Likewise, it can be observed that it is not ascribed to a single typology of harassment, but that it is present in several, coinciding with what is recorded in the literature (Salmon, Turner, Taillieu, Fortier, & Afifi, 2018). This result is especially relevant to the intervention, since the person involved is able to internalize the most inappropriate behaviours of both roles, victim and aggressor, suffering victimization by harassment and reproducing the perpetration thereof, experiencing the most harmful consequences (Nansel et al., 2001; Save the Children, 2016; Smokowski & Kopasz, 2005; Tobin et al., 2005).

From the point of view of the intervention, it has been shown that different types of programs are effective in reducing bullying (Huang, Espelage, Polanin, & Hong, 2019; Polanin, Espelage, & Pigott, 2012). However, taking into account the results obtained, we believe that intervention programs should consider the superposition of victim-aggressor roles as a reality that is present in the school context. In addition, considering the rise and impact of new technologies, it is interesting that intervention programs include cyberbullying (Waasdorp & Bradshaw, 2015), which does not distinguish qualitatively from traditional harassment (Brown, Demaray, Tennant, & Jenkins, 2017), poses new needs and challenges of the intervention.

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## ARE CONFESSIONS ENOUGH EVIDENCE TO SENTENCE A DEFENDANT?

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### Abstract

Confession evidence as a burden of proof has been a source of controversy for the last decades, being continuously questioned as sufficient evidence and by the methods to obtain it. Laboratory research has recently been analysed (Stewart, Woody, & Pulos, 2018), but the results are not valid as the effect sizes have not been weighted. As for this, a new search was made in the scientific databases of reference, Web of Science and Scopus. A total of 17 primary studies were found obtaining 22 effect sizes for a total of 1,704 participants. Effect sizes were computed with Cohen's  $h$  (differences between proportions: accepting false confession vs. not accepting) for one-sample. The results showed a non-significant effect size,  $h = -0.0077$ , 95% CI [-0.864, 0.102], non-generalizable, 80% CV [-2.55, 2.57], and mediated by moderators, % Var = 5.05. Succinctly, the probability of accepting a false confession is the same of refusing it (50%). Although these are laboratory results and, for then, with face validity for real context, they are enough to establish that confessions should not have probative value per se, as they infringe the principle of presumption of innocence.

**Keywords:** false confession; police interrogation; legal compliance; legal evidence; testimony

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## **Introduction**

The judicial decisions are made based on the veracity of the testimony (Novo & Seijo, 2010), mostly on private crimes, as they rarely have proofs but the declarations of legal actors. In that way, Hans and Vidmar (1986) established that around the 85% of those decisions are made considering the results obtained about the credibility of the testimony.

This credibility of the testimony is judicially assessed in two variables: reliability and validity (Kaplan, 1975; Ostrom, Werner & Saks, 1978). The reliability is referred to the source of the testimony (e. g. if the statement is taken by the police and the police is seen as a reliable source, then the content of that statement would be taken as reliable) and validity refers to that which would be relevant and pertinent to the case (Arce, Fariña & Fraga, 2000).

Is for those two reasons that it is crucial to know how a statement must be obtained in an objective manner and with every procedural guarantee. In that way, it has been widely investigated how the police have to develop an interrogatory in order to obtain a confession, as it constitutes a testimonial evidence (in the same manner as a victim's or an eyewitness' are). Traditionally was thought that the most effective way to elicit a real confession was adopting an authoritarian role, which could include even physical contact or direct threats (Kassin, 1997). These techniques stopped being admitted in courts, as they understood that false confessions could be elicited with them (Arce, 2017, Kassin & McNall, 1991). For that reason, most used police techniques have to do with psychological manipulation of the defendant (Leo, 2004), being these accepted by courts. In this way, and using a handbook of which techniques should be used in an interrogatory (Inbau, Reid, & Buckley, 1986), Kassin and McNall (1991) developed a classification of the main police techniques to get a confession, and they found two main categories: maximization and minimization.

Maximization is based on exaggeration of the found evidence against the defendant and the consequences he/she may have, especially if the person does not confess. For that reason, the underlying emotion of this technique is fear.

By contrast, minimization is based on moderation, offering moral justifications to the defendant and reducing the defendant's tension in order to feel comfortable and understood and then confess. They also diminish the possible consequences that he/she may have even if he/she confesses. In that way, what underlies this technique is confidence (although it is fake).

These authors include another two techniques, as are direct threats and promises of salvation if the person confess, but both of them are not admitted as an evidence by any court.

In this way, the PEACE model was created, in order to develop a technique which could be used as an evidence in a court and also that it ensures the reliability of the confession and to guarantee ethical procedures. This model was born as a transition of interrogatories into police interviews in order to avoid judicial errors -derived from certain police techniques- that had been proved (Paton et al., 2018).

One of these judicial errors are false confessions, simply defined as the confession a person make about a crime they did not commit (Gudjonsson, 2003). Some authors, as Kassin & Wrightsman (1985) have determined several types of false confession by its psychological involvement. Thus, in a basic level are voluntary confessions, made without any police pressure needed, merely perceived as an instrumental profit; in the next level are coerced-compliant confessions, in which some police pressure is present and confessions arise to avoid this pressure; finally are coerced-internalised confession, which are made as the person really believes in their culpability because of the pressure received (Gudjonsson, 2017).

Despite this, there is a general belief that a person would not confess anything that they did not commit (and thus, make a false confession). However, scientific literature has found that false confessions are possible (Kassin & Kiechel, 1996; Nash & Wade, 2009). This state of the art entailed a controversy in countries in which the judicial system admits confessions as the main burden of the proof, because if the confession is false, an innocent would be condemned, and that constitutes an inadmissible judicial error.

Because all of that, it was necessary to do a literature review in order to know the real probability of accepting non-committed punishable acts. Thereon, Stewart, Woody and Pulos (2018) carried out a meta-analytic review of the laboratory mock literature. However this is not in fact a meta-analytic review, as effect size inter-studies data are not weighed i.e., they are just an arithmetic mean of the probability of accepting a false confession. For all of that, a meta-analytic review of the laboratory literature was raised in order to know the weighed effect size of the interrogatory on the acceptance of false confessions.

## **Method**

### **Databases search of studies**

Searches were carried out in the main scientific databases: Web of Science (*Core Collection, Current Contents, Medline, Scielo, KCI-Korean* included) and Scopus (refined the search by articles and reviews). The term “false confession” was used as a descriptor, and 167

and 292 studies were found in Web of Science and Scopus respectively. Via these articles and with a “snowball” method (it is, by reviewing references), another 5 studies were included. In sum, a total of 17 studies met the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

### **Inclusion / exclusion criteria**

As inclusion criteria were included: a) studies that include the acceptance of a confession by an “innocent” that were carried out in the laboratory, regardless of the methodology used for that; b) studies that include acceptance of the false accusation data, without considering cognitive processes as internalization or confabulation. In that way, studies that define false confession as Kassin & Wrightsman (1985) did as coerced-compliant confession will be included; and c) studies that have data enough to calculate an effect size.

Studies were excluded if: a) they assess false confessions as a punctuation in a scale (as suggestibility scales (e.g. Gudjonsson Suggestibility Scale, Gudjonsson Compliance Scale) and b) non-published studies (Daubert criteria).

### **Coding of primary studies**

The included variables in the codification were: a) main author and year; b) sample size; c) sample frequency or percentage of accepting the accusation; d) sample frequency or percentage that didn't accept the accusation; and e) methodology used to induce the confession.

The coding was carried out by two trained and independent raters. The coding fidelity assessment (that is, putting inclusion/exclusion criteria for the test to know if they were applied accurately) was measured by Kappa index, corrected and used as true kappa, as the variables are categorical. The true kappa is measured as the Cohen's original kappa, which corrects the random effects in the concordance, but which is incomplete if the true correspondence between codifications are not verified, and thus, true correspondence is assessed (Arce et al., 2000; Monteiro, Vázquez, Seijo, & Arce, 2018). In this case, this inter-rater correspondence was exact ( $\bar{k} = 1$ ). In addition, to grant the intra-rater reliability, a second review of the coding of the studies was carried out, resulting also in  $\bar{k} = 1$ . Likewise, coders had been consistent with other coders in other studies. In sum, verified inter- and intra-rater consistency as the inter-context consistency (among other studies), the classification and the coding of the studies was accurate on the implementation of the coding variables and the inclusion and exclusion criteria.

## Data analysis

A meta-analytic review of experiments was carried out following the Bare-Bones procedure with fixed effects and correcting the size effect by the sampling error. To measure the global effect size the Cohen's  $h$  was used (Cohen, 1988).

## Results

From the 17 studies that finally met the inclusion/exclusion criteria and thus were included in the analysis, 22 effect sizes were calculated and a total  $N$  of 1,704 participants, with 847 of them (49.71%) accepted a false confession, that is, the half of the participants accepted having committed acts of which they were not responsible,  $\chi^2(1, N = 1704) = 0.06, ns$ . The high probability of accepting a false confession, led us to calculate the Cohen's  $h$  effect size for one sample of  $n$  observations.

The results of the meta-analysis (see Table 1) showed a negative but non-significant (when confidence interval includes zero, it indicates the estimated effect size is non-significant) and non-generalizable (when credibility value includes zero, it indicates the estimated effect size is non-generalizable) mean effect size. Additionally, the percentage of variance explained by sampling error, 5.05%, points that results are mediated by the effect of moderators (75% rule; Hunter, Schmidt & Jackson, 1982). In fact, there are some studies in which the confession rate was zero.

Table 1. *Global meta-analysis results*

Measure	$h$	95% CI	80%CV	% Var
False confession	-0.0077	[-0.864, 0.102]	[-2.55, 2.57]	5.05

*Note.*  $H$ : Cohen's  $h$ ; 95% CI: 95% confidence interval for  $h$ ; 80%CV: 80% interval of the credibility value for  $h$ ; %Var = variance accounted for by sampling error.

## Discussion

With all the obtained results, it can be concluded that:

- a) The probability of an induced false confession due to an interrogatory is the same as the probability of not accepting it.
- b) In order to guarantee the principle of presumption of innocence, the probability of a false confession should be zero. For that, confessions arose within interrogatories are not enough evidence to condemn a defendant.

- c) Confessions should not even be taken as an admissible evidence by courts, as they contaminate the defendant witness memory, in the same way contaminated biological evidences are not admitted.
- d) The effect size obtained of accepting vs. rejecting the confession resulted negative and non-significant, in other words, it could have been positive, but with a magnitude always lower than small.
- e) The variability inter-studies is so high that a negative size effect more than large ( $h < -1.70$ ; Arce, Fariña, Seijo, & Novo, 2015) or a positive size effect, also more than large ( $h > 1.70$ ), results are possible. Thus, the generalization of the results to the field is not valid.
- f) The high variability is mediated by moderators. In fact, in some certain conditions no interrogatory effects on false confession rate was found.

This meta-analytic results and conclusions claim the necessity of investigating and identifying the possible moderators and their effect on the results that could not be assessed in this research due to the insufficient  $k$  or  $N$ . As moderators, Redlich and Goodman (2003) pointed to the type of interrogatory as the main cause of these differential effects. In that same way, Walsh and Bull (2012) established that the defendant's statement should be obtained using open and non-leading questions in order to reduce the false confession rate. Additionally, future research should approach to establish which is the floor effect of false confession, in other words, to establish the lowest rate of false confession, independently of the interrogatory or police actions, made (Paton et al. 2018).

### **Limitations**

The existent investigation, and thus the results of the analysed studies, is a laboratory investigation and for that reason, the generalization to real contexts is limited. This limitation has been indicated as a research critic in the field of psychology and law, being coined the concept of face validity (Konecni & Ebbesen, 1992). In fact, Fariña, Arce and Real (1994) found that witnesses performed different tasks among field and laboratory studies. For that, it is necessary to verify the reality in real context on the plausibility of accepting false confessions after police interrogations.

Another possible limitation is that the primary studies has a sample formed mainly by university undergraduates, and thus studies with a greater sample heterogeneity are needed. However, it is not expected that this change will entail a lower false confession rate, as the

higher cultural and intellectual level of this population is associated to a greater resistance to normative pressure (Horselenberg et al., 2006).

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[Asterisks refer to studies included in the meta-analysis]

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## MALINGERING EVALUATION: A CONTRASTIVE META-ANALYTIC REVIEW OF F AND F-R SCALES

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### Abstract

The MMPI is the most worldwide psychometric instrument used for differential diagnostic of malingering in forensic setting evaluation. Among the validity scales, F scale from MMPI-2 and revised F scale, F-r, from MMPI-2-RF, have been reported in meta-analytic reviews as the most efficient scales for malingering classification. A controversy about what is the most efficient of these scales to classify malingering has risen. As for this, a contrastive meta-analytic review focused in F and F-r scales was performed. As for F scale, 124 primary studies were found, obtaining 256 effect sizes with 14,793 subjects in the experimental group. In relation to F-r, 36 primary studies, involving 4,743 subjects in the experimental group, were found from which 78 effect sizes were computed. The results showed an effect size corrected by sampling error and criterion unreliability more than large ( $d > 1.50$ ) for both F ( $d = 2.43$ ) and F-r ( $d = 1.51$ ). Comparatively, the results support that the effect size for F scale is significantly higher,  $q_c = 0.328$ ,  $p < .05$ , than for F-r scale. Furthermore, the distributions of honest and malingered responses are completely independent (i.e., capacity to classify correctly honest and malingering responses) in an 87% ( $U1 = .87$ ) for F scale and in a 71% ( $U1 = .71$ ) for F-r scale. Consequently, both scales are highly efficient in classifying (and discriminating between) honest and malingered responses, but F scale performs significantly better than its revised version, F-r.

**Keywords:** MMPI-2, MMPI-2-RF, validity scales, F scale, F-r scale, malingering, meta-analysis

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## Introduction

Psychological harm evaluation as a burden of proof in criminal cases is the most demanded one by courts to forensic psychologists (Arce, 2018). For its execution, forensic psychologists evaluate the psychological injury. Also, a differential diagnostic of malingering must always be carried out, according to diagnostic manuals (American Psychiatric Association, 2000, 2013) or the Law of Precedence/Jurisprudence, i.e., the principle of the presumption of innocence implies that any innocent can be convicted, so forensic evaluation must not classify simulated cases as reals (e.g., Sentence of the Spanish Supreme Court, of December, 29th, 1997, N° 1029/1997).

For these both objectives -the assessment of psychological injury and differential malingering diagnosis- is required a multi-method strategy which combines a clinical interview and psychometric instruments (Green, 2011; Graham, 2011; Rogers, 2008a). The standard clinical interview is not valid to forensic evaluation as it does not consider the differential diagnostic of malingering, which is included in the Structured Inventory of Reported Symptoms [SIRS] (Rogers, Bagby, & Dickens, 1992) and the Forensic-Clinical Interview (Vilariño, Arce, & Fariña, 2013). Nevertheless, the SIRS is not valid for forensic psychology harm measurement as a causal nexus between the investigated facts and the harm must not be established. Regarding to psychometric instruments, the MMPI is the most worldwide recognized instrument in forensic evaluation and the most investigated one. In addition to the MMPI and its re-standardization, the MMPI-2 (Butcher, Dahlstrom, Graham, Tellegen, & Kaemmer, 1989), is the reviewed version of the last one, the MMPI-2-RF (Ben-Porath & Tellegen, 2008/2011). This new version reduces the original 567 items into 338, under the assumption that is possible to obtain results as valid as those of the original version with lower application times. However, it has been a source of controversy as it raises the question of which of them is better to detect malingering.

Regarding to the scales that each instrument uses to assess the malingering, it should be noted that the MMPI-2-RF eliminates some of the included in the MMPI-2 (e.g., Fb), as so as some indexes (e.g., F-K). Besides, some other scales are maintained (e.g., Fs) while other are reviewed (e.g., F-r, L-r, K-r). Among this last group, it is highlighted the F scale, whose reviewed version is the F-r. This scale has been considered, from several meta-analytic reviews, as the most used effective scale to detect malingering, in its original version (Rogers, Sewell, Martin, & Vitacco, 2003) as in the reviewed one (Sharf, Rogers, Williams, & Henry, 2017). In the MMPI-2, the F scale contains 60 items, which measure the tendency of a person to respond

in an unusual way, focusing on those behaviours that are far from the mean. In a practical way, less than the 10% of people of the normative sample endorse these items. In addition, the F scale is complemented with the Fb scale. This one is formed by 40 items and follows the same logic in its construction, being equivalent to the F scale in the second part of the test, where it is not included. On the other hand, the F-r scale is formed by 32 items distributed along the whole instrument. Of those, 21 are overlapped with 10 items from the F scale and 11 from the Fb scale. In that way, 79 items included in the MMPI-2 are deleted and 11 new items are included (endorsed rarely, < 10%, in the MMPI-2-RF normative sample, but not in the MMPI-2 normative sample). Therefore, the reviewed F scale has left out 50 items from the original F scale and thus it has lost measure validity. In addition, it includes 11 items from the Fb scale, and that gives to it more validity compared to the original F, but not compared to the global MMPI-2 (as they were included in the Fb scale and contributed to the global validity of the test). Finally, it includes another 11 items, which were not included in the original F scale; the problem with these items is that their validity differs among normative samples of the MMPI-2 and the MMPI-2-RF.

For that reviewed state of the art, and due to its transcendence to the assessment of malingering in forensic psychology, a review of the literature in which is contrasted the efficacy of the F and F-r scales is raised. In other words, we intend to know which of the two versions - the original or the reviewed- is more effective, as both assess infrequent responses, i.e., items that are rarely (< 10%) endorsed by the normative samples.

## **Method**

### **Search of studies**

The search of studies was carried out in order to find every study that assess the malingering in the MMPI-2 or in its reviewed version, the MMPI-2-RF with the F and F-r scales, respectively. First, systematic and meta-analytic reviews were identified, and the primary studies included in them were taken, as so were the keywords they used in order to find more studies. Next, and combining these keywords, new searches were performed in the main scientific databases (Web of Science, Scopus and PsycInfo) and in Google Scholar. A total of 1,268 studies were found, and the following inclusion criteria were applied: a) those in which F and/or F-r scales were used to assess malingering; b) an effect size was given or the data that allow to calculate it. A total of 124 primary studies met these inclusion criteria for the F scale and 36 for the F-r scale; with these, 256 and 78 effect sizes were calculated, respectively.

### **Coding of primary studies**

From the studies that met the inclusion criteria, these variables were coded for its future analysis: a) article reference; b) design characteristics (kind of design, groups used, method followed to create the groups); c) sample characteristics (size, gender, age); and d) an effect size or necessary data to calculate it. The coding was carried out by two coders independently, resulting in an inter-rater exact concordance ( $k = 1$ ).

### **Data analysis**

The effect sizes included were those calculated in the primary studies and previous meta-analytic reviews, which calculated Cohen's  $d$ . When an effect size was assessed with another index, it was transformed into Cohen's  $d$ . When studies provided data for it, it was calculated Cohen's  $d$  (size matched groups) or the Hedges'  $g$  (groups of dissimilar sizes). Effect sizes were weighted for sample size ( $d_w$ ) and corrected for criterion unreliability ( $\delta$ ). As for the correction for the criterion unreliability, internal consistency for F Scale was taken from the meta-analytic review of Parker, Hanson y Hunsley (1998),  $\alpha=.77$ , while for F-r Scale from MMPI-2-RF Manual,  $\alpha=.70$ .

The analysis of the differences between the F and F-r effect sizes were estimated using the Cohen's  $q$  statistic i.e., transforming the effect sizes into correlations and computing the difference between correlations.

Given that the ordinary interpretation of the magnitude of the effect sizes i.e., small (0.20), medium (0.50), and large (0.80), should not be applied to this context as higher effect sizes are usual in forensic psychological assessment (Arce, Fariña, Novo, & Seijo, 2015; Fariña, Redondo, Seijo, & Novo, 2017; Rogers, 2008b), the percentile for the effect size and the percentage of superiority for the effect size were calculated (Monteiro, Vázquez, Seijo, & Arce, 2018; Vilariño, Amado, Vázquez, & Arce, 2018).

Effect sizes from meta-analytic reviews are extremely useful to establish the discriminant capacity of the scales between honest and malingered responding but are insufficient for knowledge transfer to forensic practice which requires  $N = 1$  designs (Fariña, Arce, Vilariño, & Novo, 2014). As for this, Cohen's  $U1$  was computed to outline the ability of the scales to classify honest and malingered responding.

## Results

The results show a positive and significant (see  $d$  in Table 1) mean effect size for both F and F-r scales, with a magnitude more than large ( $\delta > 1.50$ ), corresponding for F Scale with the 99.2th percentile and higher than 98.4% of the all possible effect sizes; and for F-r Scale to 86.21th percentile and higher than 72.4% of the all possible effect sizes. Consequently, both scales discriminate among honest and malingered responses. On the other hand, responses distribution of honest and malingering participants are totally independent in an 81% ( $U1=.87$ ) on the F scale and in a 71% ( $U1=.71$ ) on F-r scale. In other words, both scales have a great ability to classify correctly honest and malingered responses.

*Table 1. Meta-analysis results for F and F-r scales*

Scale	$k$	$N$	$d_w$	$SD_d$	95% $CI_d$	$\delta$
F	122	14621	2.13***	1.75	2.40, 2.46	2.43
F-r	36	4731	1.26***	0.92	1.48, 1.54	1.51

*Note.*  $k$  = number of studies;  $N$  = total sample size;  $d_w$  = effect size weighted for sample size;  $SD_d$  = observed standard deviation of  $d$ ; *Note.*  $k$  = number of studies;  $n$  = total sample size;  $d_w$  = effect size weighted for sample size;  $SD_d$  = observed standard deviation of  $d$ ; 95%  $CI_d$  = 95% confidence interval for  $d$ ;  $\delta$  = effect size corrected for criterion unreliability.

Regarding to the comparison between both scales, although both are effective, the original F scale has an effect size significantly higher to the F-r's,  $q_c = 0.328$ ,  $p < .05$ . In that way, the F scale discriminates better between honest and malingered responses than the F-r, and it also classifies malingering significantly greater.

## Discussion

The correct classification of all the malingered responses is a court mandate for the forensic assessment of psychological harm because if a malingered response is classified as an honest one, an innocence person will be sentenced, violating the principle of the presumption of innocence. Bearing that in mind, with the results obtained, it can be concluded that:

- a) Neither F scale nor F-r scale fulfil, in a restricted sense, with the court orders and legal mandates for guaranteeing the presumption of innocence, as these do not classify correctly all malingered responses. Therefore, they cannot be enough forensic proof, and they must be complemented with other measures in order to detect malingering correctly.
- b) F and F-r scales not only significantly discriminates between honest and malingered responses, but the magnitude of this discrimination is more than large. These results coincide with other previous meta-analytic reviews, both those of F scale (Berry, Baer, &

Harris, 1991; Rogers et al., 2003; Rogers, Sewell, & Salekin, 1994), and F-r scale (Ingram & Ternes, 2016; Sharf et al., 2017).

- c) F and F-r scales has a statistically significant and more than large ability to classify malingered responses (forensic task) and honest ones.
- d) The discriminative ability of F scale between honest and malingered responses is higher than F-r's. As well, the F scale significantly classifies the malingering better than the F-r scale.

This meta-analysis entails some generalization limitations that has to be considered. First, the results cannot be generalised to other scales or instruments. Second, moderator effects have not been studied, mainly the research design (Ingram & Ternes, 2016) and the gender of the participants (Han et al., 2013), which probably have differential effects in the results.

Future investigation should analyse every scale and validity indexes included in both instruments, since to classify all malingered responses, a combined use of the different scales and indexes is required (Arce, Fariña, Carballal, & Novo, 2006, 2009) and so is a multi-method approach, which combine psychometric instruments with a clinical interview (Greene, 21011; Graham, 2011; Rogers, 2008a). Only with a multi-measure and multi-method strategy is possible to correctly classify every malingered response (Arce et al., 2006, 2009).

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[Asterisks refer to studies included in the meta-analysis]

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