

Relation between Dating Violence and Traditional Gender Roles in Men

Relación entre la Violencia en el Noviazgo y los Roles de Género Tradicionales en hombres

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Abstract:

INTRODUCTION: The identification of violence inflicted by the intimate partner as a public health problem has shown a social, political and ideological advance. The aim of this paper was to investigate the relation between dating violence and gender roles in a male sample of Pachuca students. Literature has shown a strong relationship between gender roles at dating and violence inflicted by an intimate partner. **MATERIAL AND METHODS:** In order to find this association a correlational design was used. The scales used were: The Traditional Dating Roles Scale (alpha 0.96, 71.99% of explained variance) and the Dating Violence Instrument (alpha 0.90, 87% of explained variance) both created for Mexican population. The two scales were applied into a sample of 157 straight male participants (59 high school students and 98 university students). **RESULTS:** A high and negative association was found between Traditional Dating Roles (person, sexuality, active) and Dating Violence (verbal, blackmail, jealousy, control, social requirements, and humiliation). **CONCLUSIONS:** The stereotyped gender roles during dating have a positive aspect, for men, during dating relationships.

Keywords:

Gender, violence, roles, males, dating

Resumen:

INTRODUCCIÓN: La identificación de la violencia por parte de la pareja íntima como problema de salud pública ha representado un avance social, político e ideológico. El objetivo de este trabajo fue investigar la asociación entre la violencia en el noviazgo y los roles de género tradicionales en las citas de noviazgo en una muestra de estudiantes de sexo masculino residentes de la Ciudad de Pachuca. La literatura ha mostrado una fuerte relación entre los roles de género en las citas de noviazgo y la violencia ejercida por el compañero íntimo. **MATERIAL Y MÉTODOS:** Para encontrar esta asociación se utilizó un diseño correlacional. Se aplicaron la Escala de Roles Tradicionales Durante las Citas de Noviazgo (alfa 0.96 y 71.99% de varianza explicada) y el Instrumento de Violencia en el Noviazgo (alfa 0.90 y 82% de varianza explicada), ambos para población mexicana, en una muestra de 157 hombres heterosexuales (59 estudiantes de preparatoria y 98 estudiantes de universidad). **RESULTADOS:** Se encontró una asociación negativa y alta entre los Roles Tradicionales Durante las Citas de Noviazgo (persona, la sexualidad, activo) y la violencia en el noviazgo (verbal, el chantaje, los celos, control, requisitos sociales y humillaciones). **CONCLUSIONES:** Los roles de género estereotipados en las citas tienen un aspecto positivo, para los hombres, durante las relaciones de citas.

Palabras Clave:

Género, violencia, roles, hombres, noviazgo

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the study of violent behaviour in dating relationships is highly relevant. An important aspect in the study of this

phenomenon is that they occur at a stage of life where patterns of partner interaction are learned that can be extended to adulthood. Contrary to what may be thought, it is not only due

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to the high statistics but also due to its consequences on the physical and mental health of the victims.¹ In the Mexico City, there were 6,503 complaints from men, from January 2014 to November 2015 at the Attorney General's Office, who reported being assaulted by their wife or concubine.² This work covers aspects related to the reporting of dating violence and dating behaviors in a male sample of students from Pachuca and was carried out between July and December of 2014.

DATING VIOLENCE

Dating is understood as a loving relationship between two individuals with or without the intention of getting married and without sustaining a coexistence. While dating violence is defined as the series of acts that hurt another person, these acts can occur in a relationship where there is attraction or in a relationship where people go out on dates to have fun or spend leisure time.

Within dating violence, physical, emotional or sexual actions or threats may occur, therefore it may involve insults, emotional or sexual coercion, acts of violence or threats of violence. Since it is dating, it is more frequent in young people but the occurrence in adult dating is not ruled out.

Cases of men and women are reported, although, like in marital life, it is more common from men to women and it is thought that it may have a higher frequency than that reported by adult couples, however, it is less serious.^{3,4,5}

Some authors consider that violence can be seen in 3 ways:⁶

- Physical violence includes acts of physical aggression such as slapping, punching, kicking, pushing, suffocation, attacks with a weapon, etc.
- Psychological violence are verbal and emotional attacks, such as intimidation, denigration, humiliation and threats, among others.
- Sexual violence is the third type and includes acts that violate your sexual and reproductive rights, such as forced sex, exposure to unwanted sexual activities, the use of sex as a form of pressure and manipulation, and criticism of performance or sexual appearance.

Violence can be considered bidirectional, which would mean that both sexes can execute violent behaviours to control and dominate their partner.⁷

GENDER

Gender can be defined as a set of assignments of a social nature that are based on the sexual differences and biological characteristics that imply being male or female, this is how a process of stereotypes begins in which parents teach their children what their roles are in society.⁸

In fact, all relationships between individuals are mediated by a probably uncritical and non-reflective assumption of gender categories. In other words, social life is conditioned by gender categories and relationships that, in turn, are hidden from us by having naturalized the modes of social organization.⁹

For example, it is taught that man must be strong, that he must dominate and command, aggressive and rational; while the woman is weak, the one who needs to be guided, is fragile,

submissive and dependent on a good partner who knows how to guide her; these ideals that are instilled in education often result in attitudes of violence in intimate relationships by some of the members.¹⁰

GENDER ROLES IN DATING

Concerning gender roles in dating, a study that included the application of 400 semantic networks to college students to assess traditional dating roles, found that men mention that they should be gentlemanly, kind, take care of expenses, show interest in the girl, make her feel comfortable and take care of her. Regarding what they believe women should do, it was found that they should be affectionate, pleasant, cheerful, reserved, respectful, take care of their physical appearance and be demure. Some studies have shown that traditional gender roles such as letting others lead the relationship or dating can predispose to the execution and experience of violence and sexual coercion in dating.¹¹

Some cross-cultural studies show the relevance of cultural traits when repressing or executing aggressive behaviors, this being inherent to the human species in all cultures.¹² When understanding the role of gender as a cultural aspect of all societies, we would find authors who indicate that taking into account gender roles as an important factor for the process of naturalization of violence.¹³

GENDER ROLES AND VIOLENCE

Sexist stereotypes still exist and maintain their influence on the way of understanding the world. As a consequence, women and men occupy different positions and certain roles are attributed to them based on their sex. The foregoing generates inequalities that are reflected in all areas of a person's life and their interpersonal relationships, generating, in constant cases, couple relationships that are based on the domain exercised over the person who is considered inferior, that is, an interpersonal gender violence.¹⁴

A study focused on gender stereotypes and the cycle of violence carried out in Spain mentions that gender is more marked in men who exercise violence against their partner than in female victims. Regarding the opinion of the participants, it is considered that a man who exercises violence against his partner is perceived as violent, cowardly, aggressive and insecure; while the woman victim is considered insecure, weak and independent.¹⁵

Some cross-cultural studies show the relevance of cultural traits when it comes to repressing or executing aggressive behaviours, this being inherent to the human species in all cultures.¹² When understanding the gender role as a cultural aspect of all societies, we would find authors which indicate that taking into account gender roles as an important factor for the process of naturalization of violence, since due to these cultural aspects, men are forced to form their masculinity by repressing emotional aspects such as pain, fear and sadness, among others. This implies that the discharge of emotions is transformed into feelings such as anger and hostility.¹³ It could be so that the traditional stereotypes and assignments of gender role have

caused in some people a type of violence towards the opposite sex and even to the same gender.

When the aforementioned occurs within couple relationships, it has caused such concern that it has been the motivation for numerous investigations that have aimed to discover why a relationship that apparently should be a source of support, understanding and love, becomes a space where violence can take place.⁸

MATERIAL AND METHOD

The main objective of this work was to determine the relationship between the report of dating violence inflicted by the intimate partner and the acceptance of traditional gender roles within dating in heterosexual men who maintain a dating relationship. In order to do this, we used a correlational design to determine the association of the variables by means of the Pearson's Correlation Coefficient.

PARTICIPANTS

The target population of this study was made up of male high school and university students from the city of Pachuca de Soto, Hidalgo who maintain or have maintained a dating relationship. An incidental non-probability sample of 157 volunteer participants (59 high school students and 98 university students) was used.

As an inclusion criteria, participants had to be studying in high school or university, be or have had a dating relationship in the last 6 months and be heterosexual.

As exclusion criteria, we considered not wanting to participate in the study and refusing to answer the questionnaires.

The sampling phase and data analysis was carried out between July and December 2014.

INSTRUMENTS

The following psychosocial scales were used to measure the variables studied during this work:

Dating violence which is composed of 52 items that are answered through a Likert scale, these items describe behaviours and attitudes representing 7 forms of violence: verbal, blackmail, jealousy and conflict, control, social, demands and humiliation. The instrument has a reliability of .90 and 82% of the explained variance.¹⁶

Traditional gender roles in dating consisting, in the male version, of 25 items which are answered using a Likert scale, items are divided into 3 factors: person (eg. sympathetic, punctual, affectionate, gentlemanly), sexuality (eg. carrying a condom, kissing, taking the first step) and an active role (eg. giving flowers, paying, pleasing). The instrument has a reliability of .96 and 71.99% of the explained variance.¹⁷

RESULTS

The mean age presented by the sample was 16.56 years for high school students with a standard deviation of 1.94 years and for college students the mean age was 20.20 years with a standard deviation of 2.03.

A first part of data analysis includes determining the frequency of intimate partner dating violence in heterosexual men who maintain a dating relationship. Table 1 describes the results of average and standard deviations of said variable.

Table 1.

Average and standard deviation of the frequency of intimate partner dating violence in heterosexual men who have a dating relationship.

Ways of Violence	Average	Standard Deviation
Verbal	1.97	1.28
Blackmail	2.24	1.18
Jealousy	2.25	1.19
Control	2.19	1.22
Social	1.98	1.24
Demands	1.91	1.31
Humiliation	2.09	1.26

Source: Own elaboration

A second phase of the study was to find out the acceptance of traditional gender roles in dating in straight men who are dating someone. Table 2 describes the results of average and standard deviations of said variable.

Table 2.

Average and standard deviation of the acceptance of traditional gender roles in dating in heterosexual men who maintain a dating relationship.

Gender Role	Average	Standard Deviation
Person	3.74	0.98
Sexuality	3.23	0.88
Active Role	2.65	0.70

Source: Self made

In a third moment Pearson's Correlation Coefficient was used to find out the relationship between the report of intimate partner dating violence and the acceptance of traditional gender roles during dating in heterosexual men who maintain a dating relationship. These results are presented in Table 3.

Participants presented a statistically significant correlation between Social Violence and Person-type factor of the Gender Role scale in Dating ($r_{(157)} = -0.520$). With less acceptance or neglect of the image or traditional physical appearance of a man if they neglect personal aspects such as their physical appearance (smelling good, looking attractive, etc.), the participants can become victims of social violence, which is characterized by exercising surveillance and restriction in the development of the person, limiting him and deteriorating his social relations.

Similarly, a statistically significant correlation is observed between Social Violence and Sexuality-type factor of the Gender Role scale in Dating ($r_{(157)} = -0.191$). This indicates that the lower the acceptance of the traditional role in which the man is the one

who initiates sexual contacts (kissing, proposing to have sexual relations, etc.) the more likely he is to experience acts of social violence (deterioration and limitation of his social relations) on behalf of the partner.

Table 3.
Relationship between dating violence and the traditional gender role of men in dating.

Ways of Violence	Gender Role		
	Person	Sexuality	Active Role
Verbal	-0.545**	-0.194*	-0.188*
Blackmail	-0.379**		
Jelousy	-0.405**		
Control	-0.452**		
Social	-0.520**	-0.191*	-0.159*
Demands	-0.515**	-0.175*	-0.165*
Humiliation	-0.477**		

Note: *p<.05

**p<.01

Source: Own elaboration

According to the data obtained, a statistically significant correlation was found between Social Violence and Active Role-type factor of the Gender Role scale in Dating ($r_{(157)} = -0.159$). Participants present greater social violence, deterioration and limitation of their social relationships as the acceptance of traditional attitudes and behaviours decreases, abandoning the active role within the relationship (taking the initiative to establish a relationship, being the one who proposes which places to go, etc).

The data indicates a statistically significant correlation between Violence Demands and Person-type factor of the Gender Role scale in Dating ($r_{(157)} = -0.515$). According to the above, the participants become victims of demands from their partner when they have less acceptance or neglect of the image or traditional physical appearance of a man if they neglect personal aspects such as their physical appearance (smelling good, looking attractive, etc.).

According to the data obtained, a statistically significant correlation was found between Violence Demands and Sexuality-type factor of the Gender Role scale in Dating ($r_{(157)} = -0.175$). Participants become victims of demands from their partner when they show less acceptance of the traditional role in which the man is the one who initiates sexual contacts (kissing, proposing to have sex, etc.).

A statistically significant correlation was found between Violence Demands and Active Role-type factor of the Gender Role scale in Dating ($r_{(157)} = -0.165$). Participants become victims of demands from their partner as their acceptance of traditional attitudes and behaviours decreases, abandoning the active role in the relationship (taking the initiative to start a relationship, being the one who proposes which places to go, etc).

Finally, a statistically significant correlation was found between Humiliation Violence and Person-type factor of the Gender Role scale in Dating ($r_{(157)} = -0.477$). This indicates that the participants tend to experience acts or attitudes that denigrate or embarrass them publicly, if they neglect personal aspects such as their physical appearance (smelling good, looking attractive, etc.) and traditionally masculine attitudes such as being nice, funny and attentive with the girl.

DISCUSSION

Society has accepted for generations that dating is the ideal moment for a couple, since it is during this period that both individuals live each moment with intensity, joy and passion. This stage is the opportunity to share the inner world with another person, learn to express love, courage, tenderness and jealousy.¹⁸ The results obtained indicate that the more traditional the less violence. This is different from literature which indicates that the more traditional the greater the violence.^{11,14,15}

It is necessary to emphasize that the study of masculinities in Mexico and its relationship with violence still seems scattered, as well as its impact on mental health in Latin culture in general and Mexican culture in particular. On the one hand, traditional gender roles associated with sexuality and gender, for example, being the first to initiate the sexual relationship and taking the initiative in the relationship do not seem to be highly linked to violence. However, those items related to being gentlemanly, funny, romantic, neat, etc., seem to be negatively linked to violence. The foregoing suggests that, although, the stereotyping of roles may predispose to violence, the truth is that cultural aspects such as "chivalry" are positive aspects of the role of Latin masculinity that they protect are directly related to self-esteem and positive mental health. This indicates that being gentlemanly is highly related to not perceiving violence in the dating relationship.

The relationship between the two variables indicates that the lower the perception of violence received, the greater the execution of behaviours related to traditional gender roles, especially with being a gentleman and respectful. In fact, the research indicates that violence increases when the abandonment of traditional aspects is greater.^{19,20}

Violence against men by women is not something new, this phenomenon has increased due to the change in power dynamics, economic independence and control of economic resources.²¹ Today, it is socially difficult for the society to accept that a man may be physically, sexually or emotionally assaulted

by a woman, this generates little or no research in this regard. Breaking the myth that men are always the aggressors and women always the victims represents a challenge for the social sciences. Traditional gender stereotypes that attribute characteristics of strength and power to men, weakness and vulnerability to women contribute to keeping this phenomenon hidden. Even with this, surprising figures and testimonies begin to emerge, some studies point out that men and women abuse each other with a similar frequency.⁸

The relationships found in this work can make us consider that there are traditional aspects that can be considered positive since they can constitute a barrier against violence by the couple, for example: the stereotypical physical aspect continues to have acceptance by men on the other hand, when they are in a dating relationship, young people, on the other hand, the active role during dating seems to have less relevance every day. This may be due to the changes that our society begins to have, within which a man can worry and occupy more every day about his physical appearance and, in the same way, it begins to be increasingly acceptable that women can take the initiative to start a relationship, thus breaking, in small steps, stereotypical tendencies embedded in our culture.

Although it is complicated and unconventional to think of men as possible victims of violence on behalf of their partners, it is important to begin recognizing this phenomenon, the scientific community and society in general, gradually begin to accept these situations. So much so, that men report means close to the theoretical average in aspects related to blackmail and jealousy. Which shows that the boys are experiencing aspects related to psychological violence and that they are also reporting it. Violence against men is not yet considered a serious problem because it is presented in a different way. Most women use psychological violence and abuse and participate less in physical violent acts. In some cases, they come to emotionally humiliate the man in public and this can be just as devastating as physical abuse. Women can become crueler in emotional and mental areas than men; men are affected by emotional violence in contrast to physical abuse.²¹

The study of dating violence is relevant since, it is appropriate to think that a violent dating relationship will have as a future consequence a marital relationship of the same or similar characteristics, to which different types of violent behaviour patterns could be added to the experienced in the dating stage.²² The above coincides with some authors who mention that dating violence is a problem that afflicts current society, in the way it is structured and the ideologies that govern it, society tolerates and encourages gender violence, the behaviours of victims of intimate partner violence are also governed by these ideologies, roles and stereotypes, in such a way that each one acts differently²³; violence commonly becomes installed in relationships gradually, in many cases it manifests until coexistence begins, before the violence begins other events occur as an alert.²⁴

Prevention of all forms of violence begins with education in equality.²⁵ Adolescents must be informed and educated so that in no case is aggression, respect, and mutual evaluation normal; it is a prerequisite for love, which aggression is a choice made by the one who exercises it and this does not reduce the existing level of tension but increases it, that after an act of aggression the aggressor must denigrate the abused to maintain their internal consistency, that the victim will feel guilty and will accept the definition made of it by the abuser in order to excuse it, that the men who please are not sick and, therefore, do not heal, and that there is no merit in enduring the physical and verbal violence of a partner who does not know how to love.²⁶ Some authors identify and emphasize the importance of generating and implementing strategies for the prevention of violence in dating, among which are the generic action and collecting valid and reliable information on the subject, promoting research, promoting gender equality and increasing care and support for violence victims.²⁷

Future research should emphasize the prevention and care of the young population in general.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the results obtained throughout this work, we can say that the stereotyped gender roles in dating have a positive aspect for men during dating relationships. The sample used during this investigation presented low levels of violence on the subscales of the instrument used, however, this may be because they do not have the skills to recognize violent acts and attitudes, as reviewed in the previous sections, it is very possible that men in a dating relationship experience emotional rather than physical violence. On the other hand, the indication of having suffered violence at least once or sometimes is indicative of dating violence. Similarly, the social aspects (gender, values, customs, ideals, etc.) that surround men and women can have a great influence in the recognition and acceptance of a violent relationship.

Regarding traditional gender roles in dating, the men participating in this study presented scores that indicate moderate to high acceptance of different attitudes and behaviours expected for a man. This may be because we are still in a traditionalist society, which likes to harbor and preserve existing values, ideologies and roles from several generations ago. It cannot be said that this is negative, since as it could be observed some of these traditional roles have an immediate influence on whether or not a man tends to receive some type of violence from his partner.

The stereotyped physical aspect continues to have acceptance by young men when they are in a dating relationship, however, the active role when dating seems to have less relevance every day. This may be due to the changes that our society begins to have, within which a man can worry and take care more and more of his physical appearance and, in the same way, it begins to be increasingly acceptable that women can take the initiative to start a relationship, thus breaking, in small steps, stereotypical

tendencias embedded in our culture. Something similar happens in the aspect of sexuality, where both men and women begin to express their desires and disagreements without being rejected. We can observe that the physical aspect is directly related to the violence that a man can receive from his partner; the physical aspect, for both sexes, can reflect security, confidence and high self-esteem, in this way it can serve as a shield against violent behavior and attitudes on behalf of the partner.

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