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What is Violence? The Role of Sexism and Social Dominance Orientation in Recognizing Violence Against Women

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Abstract

Violence against women represents a global public health issue of epidemic proportions, as well as a gross violation of women's human rights. It can take many forms, such as physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviours. The purpose of the study was to extend past research on recognition of violence against women within the framework of the ambivalent sexism theory and the social dominance orientation (SDO) theory. Specifically, we investigated: a) to what extent different behaviours potentially harming women are recognised as a form of violence, and b) whether gender, SDO and sexist attitudes influence such recognition. Participants were 264 University students (43.1% males, mean age = 23.09 years). They were asked to rate the extent to which several behaviours constituted violence against women. Participants' sexism was assessed by the short version of the ASI and AMI scales and the Social Dominance Orientation by the SDO Italian scale. Through a factor analysis we individuated three different groups of behaviours harming women: Physical violence, unequivocally recognised as a form of violence; Limitation of freedom, containing behaviours restraining women's action; and Emotional abuse, encompassing verbally and emotionally aggressive behaviours. We tested the relations between variables through a structural equation model, finding that SDO and sexism had a direct effect on the recognition of violence, whereas the influence of gender was mediated by SDO and sexist attitudes. Thus, not gender *per se*, but gender-role attitudes that seem to affect recognition of some behaviours as a form of violence against women. Implications are discussed.

Introduction

Violence against women constitutes a pervasive social and clinical problem with harmful and, in some cases, fatal effects (Maharaj, 2017). The UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women defines such violence as any act of gender-based violence that results in physical, sexual or psychological harm to women, including threats, coercion or deprivation of freedom (UNGA, 1993). Identifying risk factors for violence against women is considered necessary and essential for prevention and intervention programs, especially in adolescent and young adult populations (Langford, 2009; Vagi, Rothman, Latzman, Tharp, Hall, & Breiding, 2013). A recent study on young adults (Ortabag, Ozdemir, Bebiş, & Ceylan, 2014) suggested that a potent risk factor linked to violence against women is the capacity of recognising a behaviour against women's human rights as a form of violence: from this point of view, the individuals' perspective, awareness, and attitudes about violence against woman are strongly associated with actually committing violence.

It is important to differentiate between different kinds of violence, especially in the Western context. In fact, in many Eastern and African cultures, violence against woman is accepted by society (WHO, 2014), unlike Western contexts, where violence against women has become a social and public policy issue, undermining the notion that violence is 'normal' (Worden & Carlson, 2005). This cultural shift primarily concerned physical violence (Worden & Carlson, 2005), but there are more subtle forms of violence, such as the limitation of freedom or the humiliation, that are generally more frequent than physical violence and can result in serious harm to women as well (Chamberland, Fortin, & Laporte, 2007). However, there is variability in whether a particular behaviour is perceived as a violent act toward women. Indeed, previous findings (Chamberland et al., 2007) revealed that individuals tend to easily recognise physical violence than non-physical forms of abuse, such as psychological and emotional violence. Moreover, physical aggressions tend to be rated more severely than the psychological ones.

Attitudes and beliefs toward these different forms of violence against women are influenced by several factors, including individual and social variables (Flood & Pease, 2009). Literature has frequently documented that one of the most relevant factors is gender (Flood & Pease, 2009; Vandiver & Dupalo, 2012; Vonderhaar & Carmody, 2015). Indeed, several studies found that, in respect to women, men have a greater tendency to accept beliefs that justify the use of violence against women, perceive a narrower range of behaviours as violent and see violent behaviours against women as less serious, damaging or inappropriate. This gender gap is especially well documented in studies among college populations (Emmers-Sommer, 2017; Powers, Leili, Hagman, & Cohn, 2015; Vandiver & Dupalo, 2012; Vonderhaar & Carmody, 2015).

In addition to the perception of violence against women, males and females differ on general attitudes concerning gender groups' relations, i.e., sexism and social dominance orientation. In particular, women, as compared to men, tend to be more hostile and less benevolent toward men, whereas men show higher hostility toward women (Glick, Fiske, Mladinic, Saiz, Abrams, Masser, et al., 2000; Rollero, Glick, & Tartaglia, 2014). Moreover, research across a wide variety of cultures has consistently demonstrated that women show lower levels of social dominance orientation than do men (Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006). Gender may interact with these attitudes in contributing to both perceptions and acceptance of violence against women. Specifically, some studies on adolescent and young adult populations (Reyes, Foshee, Niolon, Reidy, & Hall, 2016; Rollero & Tartaglia, 2018) have found that traditional and patriarchal gender role attitudes are at increased risk for justifying or engaging in violence against women, because they encompass the beliefs that males are in a dominant position over women.

Recognising violence: The role of Ambivalent Sexism and Social Dominance Orientation

Ambivalent sexism theory (Glick & Fiske, 1996, 1999) posit the existence of both hostile and benevolent attitudes toward the other sex. In respect to women, hostile sexism (HS) is an

adversarial view of male-female relationships, in which women are perceived as seeking to take advantage of men and use sexual relationships to manipulate and control men. On the contrary, benevolent sexism (BS) idealizes women implying at the same time that they are weak and best suited for conventional gender roles. Similarly, hostility toward men (HM) expresses hostility toward male dominance whereas benevolence toward men (BM) represents positive attitudes rooted in traditional admiration for men's role as protectors and providers.

Some studies have found that higher levels of HS were associated with greater acceptance of domestic violence perpetrated by men (Sakall, 2001) and greater offender's justification in case of rape (Rollero & Tartaglia, 2018). Thus, HS seems to be a potent enforcer of traditional power relations between genders and a strong predictor of acceptance of violence against women, for both adult and young adult population. For what concerns the role of benevolent sexism, findings seem to be inconsistent. On the one hand some authors found that individuals who presented higher levels of BS were more likely to blame victims of rapes (Abrams, Viki, Masser, & Bohner, 2003; Durán, Moya, Megías, & Viki, 2010). On the other hand, recent research on young adults' violence and rape myths acceptance found no significant effect of BS (Rollero & Tartaglia, 2018).

If research has largely investigated the influence of HS and BS, to our knowledge only one study on young adults examined the role of sexist attitudes toward men on the perception of violence and victim blaming in case of rape (Rollero & Tartaglia, 2018). Results of this study showed that in case of violence HM was not associated with the perception of the man's responsibility, whereas BM weakened the offender's fault.

As a theory of power relations and inequality, the theory of ambivalent sexism shares its conceptual ground with the social dominance theory (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). This theory posits that all societies are organized in group-based hierarchical systems and a common basis of group distinction is gender. Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) is defined as "a general attitudinal orientation toward intergroup relations, reflecting whether one generally prefers such relations to be

equal, versus hierarchical" (Pratto, Sidanius, Stallworth, & Malle, 1994, p.742). Individuals with high levels of SDO support a variety of beliefs and ideologies that promote the superiority of one group over another, ideologies that legitimise discrimination and appear as self-apparent truths (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). From the perspective of social dominance theory, both HS and BS may be conceptualized as myths that support gender hierarchy. Consistently, empirical research has found that SDO predicted both HS and BS (Christopher & Wojda, 2008; Malatyali, Kaynak, & Hasta, 2017), as HS promotes the male dominance over women and BS justifies women's subordinate status (Glick, Sakalli-Uğurlu, Akbaş, Orta, & Ceylan, 2015).

Men who prefer inequality among social groups (i.e., SDO) may discriminate women and apply hierarchy-enhancing actions, such as violent, aggressive and humiliating behaviours (Berke & Zeichner, 2016). To date, only one study (Berke & Zeichner, 2016) has investigated whether a social dominance orientation could influence gender-based violence in young adults. The results highlighted the role of SDO as a pertinent mechanism for hostile aggression, showing that males' desire for unequal power relations between groups (i.e., SDO) predicted gender-based violence. Berke and Zeichner (2016) suggested that an individual's preference for inequality between groups may represent a potent risk factor for enacting violence toward women, echoing longstanding feminist theories that place issues of power, dominance and control as the explanation for gender-based violence (Brownmiller, 2005; DeKeseredy & Dragiewicz, 2007).

The current study

The present study wanted to explore different kinds of forms of violence, investigating to what extent different behaviours potentially harming women are defined as a form of violence. The need to distinguish between different types of violence came from previous research (Chamberland et al., 2007), which found that individuals tend to easily recognise physical violence than the psychological one, rating the first more severely.

Moreover, we wanted to investigate the influence of gender, SDO and sexist attitudes on the perception of violence inherent in certain behaviours towards women. Several scholars have already found a relationship between these variables and the recognition or acceptance of certain forms of violence, however most studies (Abrams et al., 2003; Gracia & Herrero, 2006; Sakall, 2001; Vandiver & Dupalo, 2012; Vonderhaar & Carmody, 2015; Worden & Carson, 2005) focused on physical and sexual aggression or on the general domestic violence. Few studies took in consideration emotional and psychological forms of violence differentiating them from the physical ones (Chamberland et al., 2007; Ortabag et al., 2014). The purpose of the study is that of expanding the existing research on recognition of violence against women in young adults, including and separating different kinds of forms of violence.

Consistent with previous research, we hypothesised that:

(a) Males, as compared to females, would be less likely to define behaviours harming women as violence (Chamberland et al., 2007);

(b) Participants with higher levels of SDO would be less likely to define harming behaviours as violence than those with lower levels (Berke & Zeichner, 2016).

(c) Sexist attitudes towards males and females would influence the recognition of violence. Specifically, participants with higher levels of HS and BM would be less likely to define harming behaviours as violence (Rollero & Tartaglia, 2018; Sakall, 2001).

Method

Participants

The study enrolled 264 students from two public universities of a big Italian city. We contacted students in the libraries and classes of different faculties of both Universities in order to obtain a sample including a wide range of different students. For its degree thesis, one

undergraduate in psychology went to the libraries and classes with the surveys inviting students to participate in the study and informing them that participation in the study was voluntary and that their responses were anonymous. Among participants, 45.1% were male and 54.9% females. The average age of the sample was 23.09 years (*SD* = 3.84). Males and females did not differ in age and year in college. We guaranteed anonymity and the students were not paid for their participation. The research was conducted following the ethical principles of the Italian Society of Community Psychology.

Measures

We collected data by means of a self-reported paper and pencil questionnaire administered in person. The instrument included the following measures:

1. *The Italian short version of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory* (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996; Rollero, et al., 2014) including 12 items measuring Hostile sexism toward women (6 items, Cronbach's α=.85; e.g., "Women seek to gain power by getting control over men") and Benevolent sexism toward women (6 items, α=.78; e.g., "Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess"). The items were rated on a 6-point point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (0) to "strongly agree" (5).
2. *The Italian short version of the Ambivalence toward Men Inventory* (AMI; Glick & Fiske, 1999; Rollero et al., 2014) measuring Hostile sexism toward men (6 items, α=.78; e.g., "Men act like babies when they are sick") and Benevolent sexism toward men (6 items, α=.84; e.g., "Men are mainly useful to provide financial security for women"). The items were rated on a 6-point point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (0) to "strongly agree" (5).
3. *The Social Dominance Orientation Italian scale* (Di Stefano & Roccato, 2005) (7 items, α=.77; e.g., "Inferior groups should stay in their place"). The items were rated on a 5-point point Likert-type scale ranging from "strongly disagree" (0) to "strongly agree" (4).

4. *A list of behaviours harming women* (Ortabag et al., 2014) asking participants to evaluate on a 5 points likert-type scale if each specific behaviour was a form of violence against women (e.g., "Barring a woman from working"). These items were translated by one researcher and then two other researchers separately checked the translation. When the translations were discordant they discussed until reached agreement. The range of the scale varied between "it is not at all a violence" (0) and "it is certainly a violence" (4).
5. A brief list of socio-demographic items.

Data analyses

After descriptive statistics, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis to identify different dimensions of the definition of violent behaviours against women. Then we performed bivariate analyses (i.e., t test and correlations indexes) exploring the relations between all the variables. Finally, we tested the hypothesised relations of sexism and social dominance orientation with the recognition of violence via structural equation modelling.

Results

Descriptive statistics and factor analysis

Table 1 reports the descriptive statistics concerning the evaluation in terms of violence of the list of behaviours against women. We ordered the behaviours from the higher means to the lower ones. At the top of the list there were the behaviours implying in most cases physical violence (e.g., beating a woman, kicking a woman). Participants unequivocally defined these behaviours as a form of violence, being the mean scores close to the maximum value of the scale ("it is certainly a violence"). This result was neither surprising nor interesting, as such behaviours were evidently brutal. Moreover, skewness and kurtosis values indicated that the distribution of the responses was far from being normal. For these theoretical and statistical reasons, we decided not to use the first eight behaviours reported in Table 1 in the following analyses.

Exploratory factor analysis

We performed an exploratory factor analysis (maximum likelihood extraction; oblimin rotation) using the remaining 12 items. We extracted two factors explaining the 62% of the total variance. Table 2 reports the factor loadings. On the grounds of the loadings and the content of the items, we called the first factor Limitation of freedom and the second Emotional abuse. The first one grouped all the behaviours limiting women's possibility of action, the second grouped potentially aggressive but not physical behaviours against women.

After controlling for the internal consistency of the two factors (Limitation of freedom α=.91; Emotional abuse α=.80), we calculated the mean score of each dimension.

Bivariate analyses

Using t test we compared men and women scores across all the variables (see Table 3). As hypothesised, men showed higher hostility toward women, benevolence toward men, and SDO, whereas women scored higher on hostility toward men. Concerning the evaluations of the behaviours, females valued more violent both the limitation of freedom and the Emotional abuse.

Table 4 shows the correlations between the scales. All sexist attitudes positively correlated with each other. SDO was associated with three out of four sexist attitudes. Limitation of freedom was negatively correlated with both sexist attitudes toward women, hostility toward men, and SDO. Emotional abuse correlated negatively with hostility toward women, benevolence toward men, and SDO and correlated positively with hostility toward men.

Hypotheses verification

We tested a structural equations model assuming the influence of gender on SDO and sexist attitudes, the influence of SDO on sexist attitudes, and the influence of gender, SDO, and sexist attitudes on the factors Limitation of freedom and Emotional abuse. Based on our preliminary

analysis, we eliminated some paths (i.e., relations between variables) from the model, without considering the Physical violence factor.. We used a partial disaggregating approach (Bagozzi, 1993; Bagozzi & Edwards, 1998) randomly aggregating the items of each scale in two indicators for every construct. The items aggregating reduces the number of variables in the model that may lead to a significant worsening of the fit, but still allows for an estimation of the measure error of the latent variables. The first model tested had good fit indexes: $\chi^2(67) = 164.40$ $p<.01$; $\chi^2/gdl = 2.45$; CFI = .95; TLI = .91; RMSEA = .074. Nevertheless, because some paths were not significant, we modified the model removing such paths. Contrary to our assumptions, we eliminated the direct paths between gender and the factors Limitation of freedom and Emotional abuse because they were not significant. The second model was satisfactory and all of the parameters were statistically significant: $\chi^2(72) = 166.76$, $p<.01$; $\chi^2/gdl = 2.32$; CFI = .95; TLI = .92; RMSEA = .071. Figure 1 shows the model in graphic form.

Being male increased hostility toward women (β = .31), benevolence toward men (β = .20), and SDO (β = .36) and decreased hostility toward men (β = -.19). SDO increased hostility toward women (β = .27), benevolence toward women (β = .13) and men (β = .19), and decreased the evaluation in terms of violence of Limitation of freedom (β = -.16). Hostility toward women decreased the evaluation in terms of violence of Emotional abuse (β = -.49). Benevolence toward men decreased the evaluation in terms of violence of Limitation of freedom (β = -.42). Hostility toward men increased the evaluation in terms of violence of both Limitation of freedom (β = .26) and Emotional abuse (β = .36). All of the sexist attitudes were correlated (r ranging from .46 to .78). Limitation of freedom and Emotional abuse were correlated (r = .47) as well[1].

The bootstrap analyses (200 resamples used) allowed us to estimate the indirect effects. Being male had significant indirect effects on Limitation of freedom (β = -.22; 95% CI -.30 to -.16; *SE* = .04; $p<.01$) and Emotional abuse (β = -.27; 95% CI -.35 to -.19; *SE* = .05; $p<.01$). SDO had indirect effects on Limitation of freedom (β = -.08; 95% CI -.16 to -.03; *SE* = .04; $p<.01$) and Emotional

abuse (β = -.13; 95% CI -.22 to -.06; *SE* = .04; p<.01). The model explained 19% of the variance of Limitation of freedom and 23% of the variance of Emotional abuse.

Discussion

The present study aimed at exploring to what extent different behaviours potentially harming women are recognised as a form of violence. Moreover, we wanted to investigate the influence of gender, SDO and sexist attitudes on the perception of violence inherent in certain behaviours towards women.

As seen from the results of descriptive statistics, physical violence was unequivocally recognised as a severe form of violence. Yet, two other forms of violence emerged. The first one was defined as Limitation of freedom and included all the behaviours restraining women's action, independence and autonomy. The second was called Emotional abuse and encompassed verbally and emotionally aggressive behaviours aimed at harming and humiliating women. Concerning the evaluation of these two forms as violent, bivariate analyses showed relevant gender differences, as women valued more violent both the Limitation of freedom and the Emotional abuse. This result was in line with previous research (Chamberland et al., 2007; Vonderhaar & Carmody, 2015), arguing that the perception of violence seems to differ according to gender. However, when we tested the structural equations model assuming the influence of gender on Limitation of freedom and Emotional abuse, we did not find any direct effect of gender. Indeed, gender influence on the definition of violent behaviours was mediated by social attitudes, i.e., SDO and sexism. Some scholars (Flood & Pease, 2009) had already suggested that it is not sex *per se*, but gender-role attitudes that shape men's and women's understandings of violence against females. This result has important implications for what concern prevention interventions, which should aim at changing some attitudes towards gender roles, not only males' sexist attitudes, but also those of females who believe they must be submissive to men. Consistent with previous studies (Glick, et al., 2000; Pratto

et al., 2006; Rollero, et al., 2014), we found that men were more hostile toward women, more benevolent and less hostile toward men, and they had higher levels of SDO. These social attitudes, in turn, influenced the definition of violent behaviours.

Regarding SDO, we found a result partially in line with previous research (Berke & Zeichner, 2016), as it directly influenced the evaluation of the Limitation of freedom but not that of the Emotional abuse. Participants with higher levels of SDO seem to be less likely to consider the limitation of freedom as a form of violence. The desire to maintain the superior position of their in-group motivates social dominance orientated individuals to oppose equality-enhancing behaviours, such as allowing others to have their same freedom and rights. Contrary to our results, individuals with higher levels of SDO should denigrate and discriminate members of outgroup too, through emotionally and verbally aggressive behaviours (Berke & Zeichner, 2016; Whitley & Ægisdóttir, 2000). However, we found that SDO indirectly influenced the perception of Emotional abuse, through the mediation of HS. In line with previous research investigating the relationship between SDO and ambivalent sexism (Malatyalı et al., 2017), in our study SDO predicted HS, which in turn determined a lower recognition of emotionally and verbally aggressive behaviours as violent acts. Previous findings have indicated that individuals with higher levels of HS tend to have a negative attitude toward women because perceive them as seeking to take advantage of men (Glick & Fiske, 1996). It seems to be mainly this social attitude, rather than SDO, leading participants to legitimise behaviours that denigrate and emotionally harm women. Probably, our participants with the personal disposition to consider their own social group as superior perceive the limitation of freedom of outgroup as a 'normal' behaviour, but they do not have the need to denigrate members of outgroup. Instead, when the members of outgroup (i.e., women) are perceived as manipulative and seeking to take advantage of the ingroup members (i.e., men), emotional and verbal aggression toward outgroup seems to be an appropriate reaction, as though if women deserved this treatment. Consistent with previous research (Christopher & Wojda, 2008; Malatyali et al., 2017), SDO predicted BS, as an ideology that justifies women's subordinate status (Glick et al., 2015).

Considering the influence of SDO on sexist attitudes toward men, we found that SDO did not have an influence on HM but was positively associated with BM. Probably, not only HS and BS, but also BM can be considered an attitude that legitimises and justifies the inequality between groups and the superiority of one group over the other. Individuals with higher levels of BM consider men as needy of domestic and maternal care provided by women, but also as protectors and providers (Glick & Fiske, 1996), so they may be considered as superior because of their more essential role. BM also partially mediated the relation between SDO and the evaluation in terms of violence of the behaviours encompassed in the limitation of freedom group. Individuals with higher levels of SDO tend to oppose equality-enhancing behaviours (Berke & Zeichner, 2016), and the endorsement of a benevolent attitude toward men could better explain why participants of our study with a social dominance orientation consider the limitation of freedom of women as a usual conduct. Indeed, individuals with high levels of BM support an ideology that legitimise gender differentiation (Glick & Fiske, 2001), in which all freedom is granted to men as they have to economically provide for the family, whereas women have to take care of the house. The results of this study regarding the influence of SDO on sexist attitudes and the recognition of violent behaviours provided important suggestions, with implications for prevention. Prevention and educational programs should aim at eradicate ideologies that maintain group inequality and legitimise discrimination, because they reinforce sexist attitudes, leading to underestimate behaviours harming women.

Considering specifically the influence of sexist attitudes on the recognition of violence, we found that participants with higher levels of HS were less likely to define behaviours encompassed in the Emotional abuse group as violence, but we did not find this result for what concern behaviours which limited women's freedom. HS has been already found as a strong predictor of justification of violence against women (Rollero & Tartaglia, 2018; Sakall, 2001) and our study confirms the importance of hostility toward women in underestimating the psychological violence inherent in certain abusive behaviours. However, HS did not have an influence on the perception of the limitation of freedom: this is a result difficult to interpret, since HS fosters male dominance

(Chen, Fiske, & Lee, 2009). Maybe, in our sample, dominance over women is implemented through humiliating and verbally aggressive behaviours, but not through the limitation of women's action. Some scholars (Chen et al., 2009) have suggested that in Western culture the ideology prescribing gender roles is weaker and gender competition related to economic and power issues is less strong. These aspects could have influenced our results. In line with a recent research on violence acceptance (Rollero & Tartaglia, 2018), we found that BS did not influence the recognition of violence, either intended as Limitation of freedom or as Emotional abuse. Contrary to previous study (Rollero & Tartaglia, 2018) showing that HM was not associated with the perception of violence in case of rape, we found that HM increased the evaluation in terms of violence of both Limitation of freedom and Emotional abuse. HM represents the hostility toward male dominance and the ways in which men exert control within intimate relationships (Glick & Fiske, 1996), so having this negative attitude toward men seems to strongly enhance the recognition of violence in all the behaviours potentially harming women. Finally, only partially in line with previous research (Rollero & Tartaglia, 2018), BM weakened the evaluation in terms of violence of the behaviours encompassed in the Limitation of freedom group, but not that of the behaviours encompassed in the Emotional abuse one. As seen above, a high endorsement of BM supports an ideology that legitimises gender differentiation in all domains, including the allowed degree of freedom. On the other hand, individuals with high levels of BM respect women, because men need to domestic and maternal care provided by women (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Probably for this reason, participants of our study with benevolent attitude toward men seem to condemn emotionally and verbally aggressive behaviours toward women, perceiving them as a violence. Nevertheless, participants with higher levels of benevolence toward men seem to justify the limitation of freedom of women, suggesting that also this sexist attitude play a key role in reinforcing the support of a certain kind of violence toward women. Our results have revealed the important role of HS and BM in influencing the perception of certain behaviours harming women as violent acts, suggesting implications in the

field of prevention, that should be focused on programs which aim at eliminating these sexist attitudes.

The present study has some limitations. First, our sample was represented only by a young age group, attending university. Future research should be extended to other age cohorts, in order to investigate the replicability of these results using community samples. Moreover, in our study there was not a measurement of the real implementation of violent behaviours. Even if the individual's perspective, awareness, and attitudes about violence against women are strongly associated with actually committing violence (Ortabag et al., 2014), future studies should assess also the real perpetration of behaviours potentially harming women. Another important limitation is the particular context of the study (i.e., Italy), which does not allow to generalise the results to other areas of world, such as to some Eastern countries, where violence against women is more accepted by society (Ortabag et al., 2014), but also to US and other European countries. Further research is needed to investigate how different historical and political contexts may influence gender role attitudes and the conception of violence. Finally, the evaluation in terms of violence of specific behaviours might be affected by social desirability, even if confidentiality was assured.

To summarize, the influence of gender on the recognition of behaviors as violent was indirect, mediated by both gender role attitudes and SDO: it was not gender per se, but gender-role attitudes that influenced the perception and recognition of violence against women. The present study may contribute to prevention and intervention efforts. Indeed, understanding whether specific behaviours are recognised as form of violence is necessary in the development of interventions to increase sensitivity to the potential harm of these behaviors. As seen, violence against women is linked to a multitude of different dramatic outcomes. It represents a relevant public health issue that must be addressed. At the individual level, not recognising that they are experiencing gender violence is the biggest barrier for women in both getting help and leaving an abusive relationship. Moreover, at a

societal and community level, the ability to recognize violence can assist in responding effectively to gender abuse, in avoiding violent behaviors, and in stigmatizing violent behaviors.

Footnote

[1] These correlations were estimated for the indicators used in the model so they do not match Table 4 values computed with the scale scores.

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What is violence? The role of sexism and social dominance orientation in recognising violence against women

TABLES AND FIGURE

Table 1. Behaviours harming women: descriptive statistics.

	M	**SD**	**Skewness**	**Kurtosis**
Beating a woman	3.95	.36	-8.39	78.52
Sexually harassing a woman	3.94	.36	-8.09	73.87
Kicking a woman	3.92	.38	-6.25	49.28
Slapping a woman	3.84	.52	-4.12	20.20
Wounding a woman	3.83	.57	-4.50	24.15
Forcing a partner to have intercourse	3.76	.60	-2.88	9.06
Forcing a woman to make something against her will	3.66	.71	-2.66	8.35
Threatening a woman	3.63	.71	-2.40	6.67
Divesting a woman of her own earned money	3.56	.83	-2.12	4.39
Barring a woman from working	3.37	.97	-1.67	2.33
Keeping a woman from having enough money	3.37	.91	-1.51	1.86
Humiliating a woman	3.36	.84	-1.30	1.49

Restricting a woman from making her own choices	2.98	1.02	-0.92	0.29
Barring a woman from going on a business trip	2.85	1.22	-0.97	0.22
Barring a partner from viewing her friends	2.80	1.15	-0.76	-0.23
Yelling at a woman	1.77	1.21	0.17	-0.80
Making fun of a woman	1.77	1.19	0.12	-0.86
Wolf-whistle at a woman	1.65	1.20	0.30	-0.76
Cursing a woman	1.56	1.22	0.26	-0.91
Looking at a walking woman	.85	1.10	1.14	0.37

Table 2. Explorative factor analysis on the list of behaviours harming women: factor loadings.

	Limitation of Freedom	**motional abuseV**
Keeping a woman from having enough money	.95	
Barring a woman from working	.95	
Divesting a woman of her own earned money	.83	
Barring a woman from going on a business trip	.81	
Barring a partner from viewing her friends	.68	
Restricting a woman from making her own choices	.56	
Cursing a woman		.84
Yelling at a woman		.78
Making fun of a woman		.65
Wolf-whistle at a woman		.54
Looking at a walking woman		.51
Humiliating a woman		.45

Note. Loadings below .30 were omitted.

Table 3. Differences between Men (n=119) and Women (n=145): Mean scores and t values.

	Mean scores		
	Men	**Women**	**t**
Hostility toward women	2.44	1.54	6.63**
Benevolence toward women	2.35	2.10	1.54
Hostility toward men	2.00	2.32	-2.42*
Benevolence toward men	2.03	1.37	4.69**
SDO	1.14	.72	5.31**
Limitation of freedom	3.01	3.27	-2.53*
Emotional abuse	1.61	2.00	-4.04**

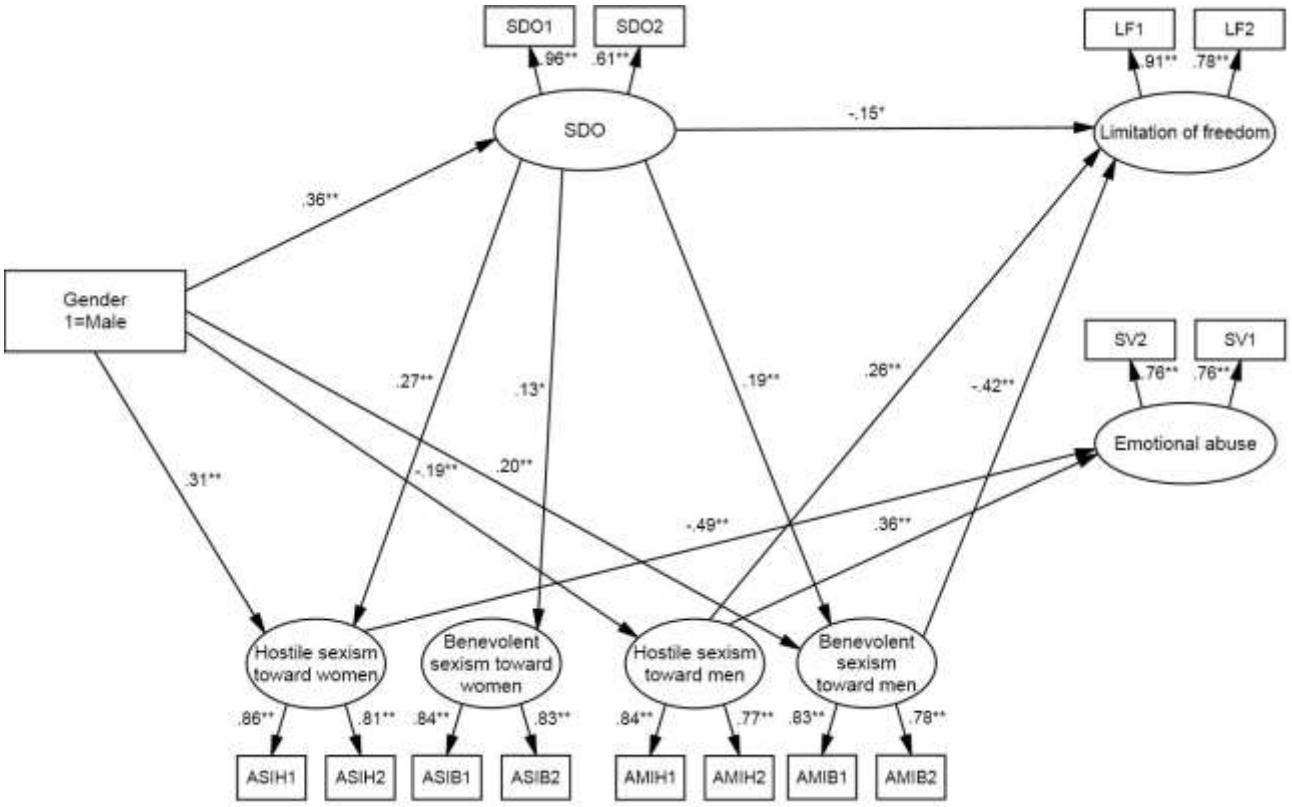
** p<.01; * p<.05

Table 4. Correlations between scales.

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1 Hostile sexism toward women						
2 Benevolent sexism toward women	.40**					
3 Hostile sexism toward men	.33**	.46**				
4 Benevolent sexism toward men	.66**	.60**	.43**			
5 SDO	.33**	.14*	.01	.28**		
6 Limitation of freedom	-.24**	-19**	.03	-.28**	-.30**	
7 Emotional abuse	-.29**	-.01	.13*	-.13*	-.15*	.38**

** p<.01, * p<.05

Fig. 1. The model tested: Standardized regression weights with standard errors.



** p<.01; * p<.05