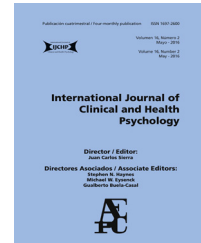




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ORIGINAL ARTICLE

Sexism and sexual risk behavior in adolescents: Gender differences

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KEYWORDS

Adolescence;
Sexism;
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Abstract *Background/Objective:* This study examines whether there are differences in the maintenance of ambivalent sexist beliefs on the basis of gender and sexual experience in adolescents. The study also investigates whether the sexist beliefs themselves are linked to sexual risk behaviors. *Method:* A representative sample of 2,703 Spanish adolescents was carried out in public and private secondary schools, with an age range of 14 to 20 years old ($M = 15.89$; $SD = 1.29$). *Results:* Males maintain more hostile, benevolent and ambivalent sexist beliefs compared to females. Sexual experience (both coital and non-coital) is linked to a greater degree of hostile and benevolent sexist beliefs, but only within the male group. In males, greater benevolent sexism is linked to vaginal sex initiation at an earlier age, while greater hostile sexism is linked to a lower proportion of condom use. In females, greater hostile sexism is linked to a greater number of sex partners. *Conclusions:* It is necessary to include specific actions on sexist beliefs in programs for the prevention of sexually transmitted infections and HIV.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Adolescencia;
sexismo;
conducta sexual;
VIH;
estudio ex post facto

Sexismo y conducta sexual de riesgo en adolescentes: diferencias en función del género

Resumen *Antecedentes/Objetivo:* Se examina si existen diferencias en el mantenimiento de creencias sexistas ambivalentes en función del género y de la experiencia sexual en adolescentes. Además, se investiga si las propias creencias sexistas se asocian con la emisión de

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comportamientos sexuales de riesgo. *Método:* Se llevó a cabo en una muestra representativa de 2.703 adolescentes españoles procedentes de centros de Secundaria públicos y privados con edades entre 14 y 20 años ($M = 15,89$; $DT = 1,29$). *Resultados:* Los varones mantienen más creencias sexistas hostiles, benevolentes y ambivalentes que las mujeres. La experiencia sexual (coital y no coital) se asocia con una mayor adhesión a las creencias sexistas hostiles y benevolentes, pero sólo en el grupo de varones. En varones, un mayor sexismo benevolente se asocia con una edad de inicio sexual vaginal más temprana, mientras que un mayor sexismo hostil con una menor proporción en el uso del preservativo. En mujeres, un mayor sexismo hostil se asocia con un mayor número de parejas sexuales. *Conclusiones:* Existe la necesidad de incluir la intervención específica sobre creencias sexistas en programas de prevención de infecciones de transmisión sexual y VIH.

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Each day around the world, more than one million people contract a Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI), which represents a serious public health problem (World Health Organization WHO, 2016b). In Spain, STI incidence rates have increased in recent years. Specifically, cases of chlamydia have tripled and cases of gonorrhea have doubled in the past five years, affecting young people between the ages of 15 and 34 to a greater extent (Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad MSSSI, 2017). In the specific case of HIV infections, in Spain, the overall rate of new HIV infections diagnosed is higher than the European Union average. Of the total number of new cases of HIV diagnosed in 2015, 55.8% occurred in young people aged between 15 and 34, and sexual contact represents the main mode of transmission (Ministerio de Sanidad, Servicios Sociales e Igualdad MSSSI, 2016). Therefore, ensuring that adolescents engage in safe sexual practices would reduce the spread of STIs/HIV and unwanted pregnancies. To this end, the global strategy of the health sector against STIs 2016-2021 highlights the need to intervene in the prevention of sexual risk behaviors, taking into account a gender perspective, in order to counteract the effects of gender-based inequality and discrimination (World Health Organization WHO, 2016a).

Consistent and correct condom use is one of the most effective forms of prevention against STIs/HIV and unwanted pregnancies (UNAIDS, 2016). Despite this, several studies demonstrate that condoms are used inconsistently by adolescents (Espada, Morales, & Orgilés, 2014; García-Vega, Menéndez, Fernández, & Cuesta, 2012). For example, a study conducted among Spanish adolescents reveals that that condoms are used inconsistently and that females use them less frequently than males (Teva, Bermúdez, Ramiro, & Ramiro-Sánchez, 2013). Furthermore, starting sexual relations at an early age and having a greater number of sex partners are considered sexual risk behaviors for STIs/HIV (Fernandes de Araújo, Teva, & Bermúdez, 2014; Teva, Bermúdez, & Buela-Casal, 2011). In this sense, certain studies show differences according to gender, such as that males engage in sexual behavior at an earlier age (Ramiro-Sánchez, Ramiro, Bermúdez, & Buela-Casal, 2018; Teva et al., 2013) and have a greater number of sex partners (Teva, Bermúdez, & Buela-Casal, 2009). Furthermore, females have less nego-

tiation power in the case of condom use, less self-efficacy to decline safe sex and less power when making decisions of a sexual nature (Bermúdez, Castro, Gude, & Buela-Casal, 2010; Bermúdez, Ramiro, Sierra, & Buela-Casal, 2013; Crosby et al., 2013; Ramiro, Bermúdez, & Buela-Casal, 2013). A possible explanation for the differences that exist between males and females in terms of sexual behavior is the existence of traditional gender roles. In fact, several studies find positive associations between adherence to traditional gender roles and sexual risk behaviors and beliefs, such as inconsistent condom use, less self-efficacy when using condoms or negative attitudes towards their use, both in males and females (De Meyer et al., 2014; Grose, Grabe, & Kohfeldt, 2014; Lotfi, Ramezani, Salehifar, & Dworkin, 2016; Santana, Raj, Decker, La Marche, & Silverman, 2006).

The theory of ambivalent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996) states that the tension between male social domination and the necessary interdependence towards women, in order to maintain intimate relations, produces two forms of sexist ideology that translate into ambivalent sexism (AS). On one hand, hostile sexism (HS) that entails attitudes that emphasize the inferiority and weakness of women compared to men. These hostile attitudes towards women prevent men from satisfying their relational needs, and there is thus a second series of attitudes that form benevolent sexism (BS) to address these intimate needs. BS is a series of attitudes based on a stereotypical and limited vision of women, but with a positive emotional tone towards the recipient. This positive emotional tone is achieved by emphasizing the protection given by men to women and heterosexual intimacy as key elements of romantic relationships. Thus, HS and BS work together to maintain gender inequality by shaping the structure of heterosexual relationships and limiting the extent to which women can gain social power (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

The existence of sexist attitudes among Spanish adolescents has been corroborated by certain studies (Carrera-Fernández, Lameiras-Fernández, Rodríguez-Castro, & Vallejo-Medina, 2013; De Lemus, Castillo, Moya, Padilla, & Ryan, 2008; Ferragut, Blanca, Ortiz-Tallo, & Bendayan, 2017). Some studies show that adolescent males

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