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Development of the Gender Role Attitudes Scale (GRAS) amongst young Spanish people



Eduardo García-Cueto^a, Francisco Javier Rodríguez-Díaz^{a,*},
Carolina Bringas-Molleda^a, Javier López-Cepero^b, Susana Paíno-Quesada^c,
Luis Rodríguez-Franco^b

^a Universidad de Oviedo, Spain

^b Universidad de Sevilla, Spain

^c Universidad de Huelva, Spain

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Abstract Gender roles depend on the attitudes and beliefs about them, which at the same time facilitate the formation of stereotypes that will foster violence in interpersonal relationships in couples. The assessment tools used tend to represent the sexist attitude towards women, without taking into account that men can also be recipients of the same behavior from their partner. The objective of the study is to provide an improved scale for the assessment of gender role attitudes, based on the theoretical perspective of gender equality. The sample comprises 2,136 young Spanish men and women, students in Vocational Training (Spanish acronym FP) and at university in the age range 15-26 years old. The results show the existence of a single bipolar factor - transcendent attitudes vs. sexist attitudes - fulfilling psychometric fit indices, and providing the basis for modifying attitudes depending on the difficulty of the items for such modification. The implications for intervention are oriented based on the perspective of prevention and changing sexist gender attitudes.

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PALABRAS CLAVE

Actitudes;
rol;
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estudio instrumental

Desarrollo de la Escala de Actitudes de Rol de Género (EARG) en jóvenes españoles

Resumen Los roles de género dependen de las actitudes y creencias acerca de los mismos, lo que al mismo tiempo facilita la formación de estereotipos que favorecerán la violencia en las relaciones interpersonales de pareja. Los instrumentos de evaluación utilizados tienden a representar la actitud sexista hacia las mujeres sin tener presente que los hombres pueden ser también receptores del mismo comportamiento por parte de su pareja. El objetivo del

* Corresponding author at: Facultad de Psicología, Plaza Feijóo, s/n, 33003 Oviedo, Spain.
E-mail address: gallego@uniovi.es (F.J. Rodríguez-Díaz).

estudio es crear una escala mejorada para la evaluación de las actitudes de rol de género, tomando como base la perspectiva teórica de la igualdad de género. La muestra está formada por 2.136 jóvenes españoles de ambos sexos, estudiantes de Formación Profesional (FP) y Universitarios, cuyas edades están en el rango de 15 a 26 años. Los resultados muestran la existencia de un único factor bipolar -actitudes trascendentes vs. actitudes sexistas- cumpliendo los índices de ajuste psicométricos, y ofreciendo las bases de la modificación de las actitudes en función de la dificultad de los ítems para dicho cambio. Las implicaciones para la intervención se orientan en base a la perspectiva de la prevención y el cambio de actitudes sexistas de género.

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Beliefs or attitudes are among the factors that have a bearing on violent conduct of any type in affective interpersonal relationships in couples. Attitudes facilitate the appearance of gender roles that assign the roles and responsibilities that men and women have in society; they are based on beliefs and opinions that facilitate a stereotyped view and thus encourage discrimination (Ferrer, Bosch, Ramis, Torres, & Navarro, 2006; López-Cepero, Rodríguez-Franco, Rodríguez, & Bringas, 2013). In turn, these gender roles demonstrate their differential effect through variables such as age, sex or level of education (Díaz & Sellami, 2014; Ferrer et al., 2006).

Traditional gender roles involve the allocation of tasks differentiated by sex, mirroring the inequality between males and females taken on by them in the social context. This fact is linked not only to possible violence directed at the partner within affective relationships, but also encourages the justification of abusive behavior. Along the same lines hostile sexism, characterized by distrust and adversarial feelings towards the partner, legitimizes the abuse of women, approving its practice and at the same time placing the blame for this conflict situation on their shoulders (Herrera, Expósito, & Moya, 2012; Lila, Gracia, & García, 2013; Lila, Oliver, Catalá, Galiana, & Gracia, 2014). It is possible that this has a bearing on the labeling of the very situations experienced in affective relationships, offering a perception of their consideration as abuse independently of recognizing specific behavior as abusive (Cortés et al., 2014; López-Cepero, Rodríguez-Franco, Rodríguez-Díaz, Bringas, & Paíno, in press). In turn, women's behavior as regards their partner status in affective relationships will influence the attitudes or perceptions of others. Herrera et al. (2012) state that when women do not accept their partner's decisions they are assessed more negatively, particularly by men with a traditional sexist attitude.

This reality leads to an assessment of sexist attitudes based on the assumption that they have taken shape in a single direction, i.e. the assessment of discriminatory attitudes towards a feminine gender role. Examples of such scales are, amongst others: *Hostility Towards Women Scales* (Check, Malamuth, Elias, & Barton, 1985), *Gender Role Conflict Scale* (O'Neil, Helms, Gable, David, & Wrightsman, 1986), *Adversarial Heterosexual Beliefs Scale* (Lonsway & Fitzgerald, 1995), *Rape Myth Acceptance Scale* (Burt,

1980), and the *Illinois Rape Myth Acceptance Scale* (Payne, Lonsway, & Fitzgerald, 1999), these latter focusing particularly on sexual aggression and its acceptance. It is true that the literature reports extensive information on discrimination against women, but we must not overlook the fact that although there is less research in this area, women can also have sexist attitudes towards men, i.e. attitudes based on hostility towards their partner or on traditional beliefs that take shape through roles allocated by gender or even sex (Rodríguez Castro, Lameiras, Carrera, & Faílde, 2010; Swim & Hyers, 1999; Travaglia, Overall, & Sibley, 2009).

Similarly, we must not overlook that in contrast to sexist attitudes towards role, there are also transcendent attitudes that must be assessed as defenders of equality from an egalitarian perspective (Baber & Tucker, 2006; López-Cepero et al., 2013). Other instruments that aim to measure inequality between men and women are the *Attitudes Toward Men Inventory* (AMI; Glick & Fiske, 1999) and the *Ambivalent Sexism Inventory* (ASI) (Glick & Fiske, 1996), this inequality being able to be expressed in a hostile or benevolent manner. In contrast, there is an instrument which in addition to measuring inequality also assesses equality between sexes, defining an attitudinal typology based on role characteristics: the *Social Roles Questionnaire* (SRQ-R; Baber & Tucker, 2006), assessing sexist and egalitarian attitudes and pointing out that both sexes can equally be recipients. The differences in each type of attitude must be emphasized, since the literature has highlighted the possible relationship between these attitudes and a higher or lower tolerance of potential abuse situations (Rodríguez-Franco, Antuña, López-Cepero, Rodríguez-Díaz, & Bringas, 2012). This leads us to propose as an objective the preparation of a new scale for the assessment of gender role attitudes using the approaches offered by the theoretical perspective of gender equality, having an effect on the contribution of how sexist attitudes may be modified.

Method

Participants

The sample is made up of 2,136 young Spanish people aged 15 to 26 years old ($M = 19.43$; $SD = 1.98$) who have had a dating

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