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## ARTÍCULO ORIGINAL

# Psychometrics properties of Psychological Dating Violence Questionnaire: A study with young couples



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**Abstract** This instrumental study examines the psychometric properties of the Psychological Dating Violence Questionnaire (PDV-Q). The scale was developed with the aim of evaluating subtle and overt psychological abuse among dating couples, and its possible bi-directionality in the implication as victim and as aggressor. A sample group of 670 heterosexual university students (62.8% women), aged between 19 and 25 years old ( $M = 22$ ;  $SD = 1.78$ ), took part in the study. Exploratory and confirmatory factor analysis revealed a satisfactory index of reliability with two different scales: *Victimization* and *Aggression*. The external validity was checked with a physical violence measure (modified Conflict Tactic Scale-2). The results indicated a significant but low correlation between psychological and physical scales. The PDV-Q joins dating and intimate violence instruments potentialities and tries to overcome their limitations. It includes a wide range of violent behaviours and it is adapted to specific characteristics from young couples.

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### PALABRAS CLAVE

Violencia psicológica;  
Cortejo;  
Parejas jóvenes;  
Estudio instrumental

## Propiedades psicométricas del Cuestionario de Violencia Psicológica en el Cortejo: un estudio con parejas jóvenes

**Resumen** Este estudio instrumental presenta las propiedades psicométricas del Cuestionario de Violencia Psicológica en el Cortejo (PDV-Q). El cuestionario se diseñó con el objetivo de evaluar el abuso psicológico sutil y manifiesto presente en parejas de jóvenes universitarios y su posible bidireccionalidad en la implicación como víctima y como agresor. Se contó con una

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muestra de 670 estudiantes universitarios heterosexuales (62,8% mujeres), con edades comprendidas entre los 19 y 25 años ( $M=22$ ;  $DT=1,78$ ). Los análisis exploratorios y confirmatorios mostraron índices de fiabilidad satisfactorios con dos escalas, *Victimización* y *Agresión*. La validez externa fue evaluada con la violencia psicológica, medida a través de una versión modificada del Conflict Tactic Scale-2. Los resultados mostraron correlaciones significativas, aunque bajas, entre las escalas de violencia psicológica y física. El PDV-Q aúna las potencialidades de los instrumentos de cortejo y los de violencia en la pareja marital, salvando las principales dificultades recogidas. Incluye un amplio rango de comportamientos violentos, adaptándolos a las características concretas de las parejas jóvenes.

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Over the last few decades national and international studies about romantic relationships have gained strength, such relationships are considerably serious outside marriage or cohabitation. Adolescents and young relationships, which are prior to the consolidation of the couple and outside marriage or cohabitation -known as dating- (Connolly & McIsaac, 2011), tend to be different from those held by adults in areas such as level of commitment, duration, sexual intimacy and the way to solve conflicts (Furman & Wehner, 1997; Molitor & Tolman, 1998). Thus, the violent dynamic that might arise will have different characteristics (for example, there's no financial dependence, emotional blackmail or other abusive conducts in relation to children, or household co-responsibility, etc.). The Report of Youth in Spain (INJUVE, 2012) points out that only 23.8% of young people between 20 to 24 years of age live with their partners and it is also observed that the higher the educational level the higher the percentage of youngsters living at the parental home. All these features make the relationships and violent manifestations among young university couples quite different from the adult ones. Violence in dating relationships in young people are characterized for being moderate, bidirectional and reciprocal (Nocentini, Pastorelli, & Menesini, 2011; Ortega & Sánchez, 2010; Viejo, 2014).

Notwithstanding, there has been less research on psychological violence than on other types of maltreatment, like physical or sexual abuse. Perhaps, the lack of psychological violence centered research is due to the fact that it can be less objective and more difficult to evaluate than physical maltreatment and other types of violence (Calvete, Corral, & Estévez, 2005; Rodríguez-Carballeira et al., 2005).

It has been in the last few decades when research interest has emerged in this field regarding adolescent and young couples' relationships. The majority of studies that include this or any other type of violence in dating relationships have considered it as a risk factor of violence in the adulthood or marital couples (Gormley & López, 2010; Moreno-Manso, Blázquez-Alonso, García-Baamonde, Guerrero-Barona, & Pozueco-Romero, 2014), establishing that psychological partner violence is a behaviour repeated along the following relationships (Lohman, Neppl, Senia, & Schofield, 2013).

Scientific literature has established that psychological violence is defined by attitudes, behaviours and styles of communication based on humiliation, control, disapproval,

hostility, denigration, domination, intimidation, threat of direct violence and jealousy (Murphy & Hoover, 1999; O'Leary & Smith-Slep, 2003). O'Leary (1999) identified in his definition control and domination actions but also verbal aggression including denigration and recurring criticism towards the partner. Marshall (1999) introduced a new perspective in the study of psychological violence by differentiating overt and subtle ways of abuse. Overt psychological violence is characterized by spreading behaviors of control and dominance easy to recognize because an aggressive and dominant style is used and it clearly affects resulting feelings, including: domination, indifference, monitoring and discredit. This type of abuse tends to occur in situations of conflict. Nonetheless, subtle psychological violence can appear in loving, joking and caring situations. Messages and actions to undermine, discount and isolate the partner are defined as subtle. These forms are independent from domination and produce an emotional damage that is difficult to recognize as abusive.

International and national research on psychological violence has shown higher rates of prevalence than other types of intimate violence (Liles et al., 2012; Zorrilla et al., 2010). These higher rates of psychological violence have been identified in dating relationships in which the implication is around 80%. Percentages regarding victimization range between 76-87% among boys and 78-82% among girls, and regarding aggression between 74-85% among boys and 83-90% among girls (Cortés-Ayala et al., 2014; Hines & Saudino, 2003; Straus, 2004; Straus, Hamby, Boney-McCoy, & Sugarman, 1996). In a recent study with university students about psychological abuse, different types of behaviors were observed to define this phenomenon, such as disparagement, hostility, indifference, intimidation, imposition of behavioral patterns, blaming and apparent kindness; the results pointed out that the indifference was the most common form of psychological violence in dating (Blázquez-Alonso, Moreno-Manso, & García-Baamonde, 2012). Different studies have found gender differences in psychological violence. On one hand, females perpetrate significantly more psychological aggression than males (Hines & Saudino, 2003). On the other hand, many studies and social opinion supported by media establish a wider presence of psychological abuse manifestations with the highest evidence of a greater rate of patterns among men (Moreno-Manso et al., 2014).

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