

The Acceptance of Dating Violence scale (ADV): Psychometric properties of the Spanish version

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Abstract

Background: The main aim of this study was to analyse the psychometric properties of the Spanish version of the Acceptance of Dating Violence (ADV) scale, which assesses attitudes that justify the use of aggression in adolescents' dating relationships. **Method:** A total of 1,579 high school students (49% girls) from Bizkaia (Spain), aged between 14 and 18 years ($M = 15.79$, $SD = 1.16$), completed this questionnaire along with the Irrational Beliefs Scale for Adolescents and the Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory. **Results:** The factor analyses suggested a one-factor structure, which fits data well for both girls and boys. Moreover, the ADV showed good internal consistency ($\alpha = .83$) and was related to general justification of violence and dating violence (perpetration and victimization). Boys (compared to girls) and adolescents who had had a dating relationship in the past year (compared to those who had not) displayed a higher acceptance of dating violence. **Conclusions:** The ADV is a useful, brief and easily applicable instrument for the assessment of attitudes toward dating violence.

Keywords: Dating violence, justification of violence, attitudes, assessment, adolescence.

Resumen

La escala Acceptance of Dating Violence (ADV): propiedades psicométricas de la versión española. Antecedentes: el objetivo de este estudio fue analizar las propiedades psicométricas de la versión española de la escala Acceptance of Dating Violence (ADV), la cual evalúa actitudes justificativas de la agresión en relaciones de noviazgo adolescentes. **Método:** participaron 1.579 estudiantes de instituto (49% mujeres) de Bizkaia, con edades entre los 14 y 18 años ($M = 15,79$, $DT = 1,16$), quienes completaron este cuestionario junto con la Irrational Beliefs Scale for Adolescents y el Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory. **Resultados:** los análisis factoriales apoyaron una estructura de un factor que mostró un buen ajuste a los datos para chicas y chicos. Además, la ADV mostró buena consistencia interna ($\alpha = .83$) y correlaciones significativas con la justificación general de la violencia y la perpetración y victimización de violencia en el noviazgo. Los chicos (en comparación con las chicas) y los adolescentes que habían tenido una relación de noviazgo en el último año (en comparación con los que no) puntuaron más alto en aceptación de la violencia en el noviazgo. **Conclusiones:** la ADV es una escala útil, breve y de fácil aplicación para la evaluación de las actitudes hacia la violencia en el noviazgo.

Palabras clave: violencia en el noviazgo, justificación de la violencia, actitudes, evaluación, adolescencia.

People use cognitions to give meaning to their social world. Cognitive schemas play a determinant role in the interpretation of situations, remembering the past, and guiding our behaviour (Calvete, 2013). Regarding aggressive behaviour, a well-documented risk factor is the justification of violence schema, which refers to belief in the social appropriateness of aggression (Huesmann & Guerra, 1997). Several longitudinal studies have shown that the belief that the use of aggression is acceptable predicts violent behaviour in children and adolescents (Calvete, 2008; Guerra, Huesmann, & Spindler, 2003). This schema has also been related to the perpetration and victimization of dating violence (DV; e.g., Borrajo, Gámez-Guadix, & Calvete, 2015;

Orpinas, Hsieh, Song, Holland, & Nahapetyan, 2013), and has been proposed as a mediational mechanism that explains the influence of violence in the family of origin on the development of DV in adolescents (e.g., Karlsson, Temple, Weston, & Le, 2016; Reyes et al., 2015; Riggs & O'Leary, 1996). Regarding sex differences, findings from some studies suggest that boys have more accepting attitudes toward DV than girls (Josephson & Proulx, 2008; Karlsson et al., 2016) and acceptance of DV has been found to be a stronger correlate of DV for boys (Foshee, Linder, MacDougall, & Bangdiwala, 2001; Torres et al., 2012).

To evaluate this cognitive schema of DV justification, Foshee and colleagues in North Carolina (United States) developed the Acceptance of Dating Violence (ADV) scale, which was used in a large number of studies (e.g., Foshee et al., 1998; Foshee et al., 2001; Reyes et al., 2015). The authors have mostly used a measure of acceptance of prescribed physical dating abuse norms, but the ADV assesses justification of both physical and sexual violence, and both prescribed and proscribed dating abuse norms. Prescribed dating abuse norms indicate that DV is acceptable under certain

circumstances, such as jealousy or in reaction to an aggression received by the partner. Contextualizing the act of aggression in provocative situations decreases the floor effects found in previous measures such as the Attitudes Towards Interpersonal Violence (Riggs & O’Leary, 1996). The items referring to physical violence assess justification of both male (six items) and female aggression (two items), whereas the two items referring to sexual violence assess justification of male aggression. This is consistent with the results of most DV epidemiological studies, which have found similar or higher prevalence rates of physical aggression for girls, but higher prevalence rates of sexual aggression for boys (e.g., Sears, Byers, & Price, 2007). In addition, proscribed dating abuse norms (two items) measure the belief that physical and sexual DV is not acceptable under any circumstances and regardless of whether the aggression is committed by a boy or a girl.

Epidemiological studies on DV in Spain have increased considerably in the last years, although much remains to be done in the etiology and prevention areas. Attitudes of acceptance of violence have been proposed as a key risk factor for DV, which may vary across countries and cultures (e.g., Kerig, Volz, Moeddel, & Cuellar, 2010). Nevertheless, there are very few previous instruments assessing attitudes toward DV in contextualized situations that have been adapted and validated with Spanish adolescents (as an exception, see the Attitudes about Aggression in Dating Situations, AADS; Muñoz-Rivas, Gámez-Guadix, Fernández-González, & González, 2011). The ADV was developed by one of the most relevant research groups in the field of DV (Foshee et al., 1998) and has been used in a large number of studies. Therefore, the main objective of this study was to gather validity evidence of the ADV scale in a Spanish sample of adolescents. This will allow for cross-cultural comparisons and help improve our knowledge about the specific role of DV attitudes in our culture and about the assessment of the effectiveness of DV prevention programs to modify them. For this purpose, we explored the ADV factor structure, convergent validity evidence and reliability. In addition, another objective of the study was to analyse differences in the acceptance of DV as a function of participants’ gender and relationship status (being in a relationship or not).

Method

Procedure

As this was the first adaptation of the ADV to Spanish-speaking adolescents, the guidelines of the International Test Commission (2010) and the recommendations of Muñiz, Elosua, and Hambleton (2013) were followed. The research team considered the linguistic and cultural differences in the translation and adaptation of the items for Spanish adolescents. The standard translation and back-translation process was used. After a pilot application of the scale, the two items assessing proscribed dating abuse norms were reworded because they did not perform well. Specifically, Item 10 (“Forcing a dating partner to have sex is never OK”) was reworded as “I think it is very wrong to force a dating partner to have sex on a date”, and Item 3 (“Hitting a dating partner is never OK”) was positively reworded as “Hitting a dating partner may be OK”. In addition, considering the predominance of a reciprocal pattern of physical DV (e.g., O’Leary & Slep, 2003), in the Spanish version of the ADV, all the items regarding the acceptance of proscribed physical dating abuse norms were reformulated to

assess justification of violence performed by both genders (e.g. “Girls/boys sometimes deserve to be hit by the boys/girls they date”). Finally, we joined together two pairs of items from the original scale whose content was identical but which, in one case, assessed the acceptance of hitting a girl and, in the other case, the acceptance of hitting a boy.

Study participants came from 9 public and 13 private high schools in Bizkaia (Spain). The sample was first stratified by school type (i.e., private vs. public), and the schools were then selected randomly by means of a cluster sampling procedure. We contacted the schools to explain the objectives of our study. After the principal agreed to take part, we sent informative letters to parents and invited them to decide whether to let their children participate. Measures were administered by trained research assistants. All participants were evaluated in groups during regular class hours in their classrooms.

Participants

The sample consisted of 1,579 adolescents (49% girls) aged between 14 and 18 years ($M = 15.79$, $SD = 1.16$). Regarding ethnicity, the majority of the participants (92.2%) were Spanish, 5.9% were from South America and 1.9% were from Eastern Europe, Africa, and other countries. The socio-economic class of the participants was as follows: 13.8% low, 19% medium-low, 31.8% medium, 28.8% medium-high, and 6.6% high (Spanish Society of Epidemiology, 2000).

Instruments

The *Acceptance of Dating Violence* (ADV) scale –Spanish version is composed of 10 items rated on a 6-point scale ranging from 1 (*completely untrue*) to 6 (*completely true*), which assesses acceptance of dating abuse norms. Table 1 includes the entire questionnaire.

The Justification of Violence subscale of the *Irrational Beliefs Scale for Adolescents* (IBSA; Cardenoso & Calvete, 2004) was used to assess the belief that aggression is appropriate in a variety of situations (e.g., “Sometimes you have to hit others because they deserve it”), and that aggression enhances self-esteem and helps to maintain status among peers (e.g., “Being good at fighting is something to be proud of”). It consists of 9 items. In this study we used the modified version by Calvete (2008) in which each item is rated on a 6-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*completely untrue*) to 6 (*completely true*). In this study, the alpha coefficient was .82.

The *Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory* (CADRI; Wolfe et al., 2001) was used to assess the presence of aggressive acts in adolescents’ dating relationships (e.g., “I kicked, hit or punched him/her”; “He/she kicked, hit or punched me”). It consists of 25 bidirectional items (perpetrator/victim) rated on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from 0 (*never*) to 3 (*often*). Participants were asked to answer the questionnaire only if they had had a dating partner in the past year. In this study, Cronbach’s α were .89 for both Perpetration and Victimization subscales.

Data analysis

We examined the internal structure of the ADV through exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). For this purpose, and following the recommendations of

Table 1
Acceptance of Dating Violence (ADV) scale

Below is a list of sentences that a boy/girl can use to describe him/herself. Please read each sentence and decide how accurately it describes you for the past year. Choose and circle the score from 1 to 6 that best describes you. When you are not sure, answer what you feel. [A continuación encontrarás una lista de frases que un chico/a puede utilizar para describirse a sí mismo/a. Por favor, lee cada frase y decide el grado de exactitud con que te describe durante el último año. Escoge y rodea con un círculo la puntuación desde 1 a 6 que mejor te describe. Cuando no estés seguro/a, contesta lo que sientes]

1 = Completely untrue [Totalmente falso]	3 = More untrue than true [Más falso que verdadero]	5 = Most times true [La mayoría de veces verdadero]						
2 = Most times untrue [La mayoría de veces falso]	4 = More true than untrue [Más verdadero que falso]	6 = Completely true [Me describe perfectamente]						
1. It is OK for a boy/girl to hit his/her dating partner if she/he did something to make him/her mad [Está bien que un/a chico/a pegue a su pareja si ésta hizo algo para enfadarle]			1	2	3	4	5	6
2. It is OK for a boy to force a girl to have sex if she got him sexually excited [Es correcto que el chico fuerce a la chica a tener sexo si ella le ha excitado sexualmente]			1	2	3	4	5	6
3. Hitting a dating partner may be OK [Pegar a tu pareja puede estar bien]			1	2	3	4	5	6
4. It is OK for a boy/girl to hit his/her dating partner if she/he insulted him/her in front of friends [Está bien que un/a chico/a pegue a su pareja si ésta le insulta delante de sus amigos]			1	2	3	4	5	6
5. Girls/boys sometimes deserve to be hit by the boys/girls they date [Los/as chicos/as a veces merecen ser pegados por su pareja en sus citas]			1	2	3	4	5	6
6. Sometimes boys/girls have to hit their dating partners to get them back under control [A veces los/as chicos/as tienen que pegar a sus parejas para mantenerlas bajo su control]			1	2	3	4	5	6
7. It is OK for a boy/girl to hit her/his dating partner if she/he hit him/her first [Es correcto que ella/chico/a pegue a su pareja si ésta le ha pegado primero]			1	2	3	4	5	6
8. It is OK for a boy to force a girl to have sex if he paid for all the costs of a date [Está bien que el chico fuerce a la chica a tener sexo si él ha pagado todos los gastos de la cita]			1	2	3	4	5	6
9. A girl/boy who makes her/his dating partner jealous on purpose, deserves to be hit [Ella/chico/a que pone celoso/a a su pareja a propósito merece ser pegado/a]			1	2	3	4	5	6
10. I think it is very wrong to force a dating partner to have sex on a date [Creo que está muy mal forzar a tu pareja a tener sexo en una cita]			1	2	3	4	5	6

Note: Item 10 was deleted from the final version of the scale because it did not show adequate psychometric properties

Izquierdo, Olea, and Abad (2014), the participants were randomly divided into two subsamples of 790 and 789 adolescents. Given the absence of previous validation studies, we first conducted EFA to determine the appropriate number of factors by using the correlation matrix, the principal axis factoring method for extraction, the Kaiser’s criterion of eigenvalues over 1 for the retention of factors, the oblimin method for factor rotation, and the criterion of a minimum factor loading of .40 for the retention of items. Next, CFA was conducted with LISREL 8.8 (Jöreskog & Sörbom, 2006) to verify the pattern of item-factor relationships based on the EFA. As our data did not follow a normal distribution (skewness values ranged from 2.05 to 7.35, and kurtosis values from 3.76 to 66.80), we used the robust maximum likelihood (RML) method, which requires an estimate of the asymptotic covariance matrix of the sample variances and covariances and includes the Satorra-Bentler scaled χ^2 index (S-B χ^2). Finally, we explored whether the factorial structure of the ADV was invariant across gender and relationship status through multiple-group analyses. For this purpose, the following three steps were conducted. First, the factor structure was tested for each subsample separately. Second, we tested the configural invariance of the model to demonstrate that the validity of the structure was equivalent across subsamples. Third, we tested the invariance of factor loadings. The comparison between models was conducted using the corrected chi-squared difference test (Crawford & Henry, 2003) and change in CFI (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002).

To explore convergent validity evidence, we calculated the correlation coefficients between acceptance of DV and other

theoretically related variables, such as general justification of violence, DV perpetration and DV victimization. In addition, independent *t*-tests were used to compare means in acceptance of DV between groups as a function of the participants’ gender and relationship status. For the previous analyses, mean scores were previously calculated by averaging item scores of the ADV and IBSA scales, and the CADRI DV Perpetration and Victimization subscales. These analyses, EFA and the reliability analysis were conducted with IBM SPSS 23.

Results

Factorial validity evidence and reliability

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of .90 indicated excellent sampling adequacy for factor analysis, and all KMO values for individual items were between .82 and .93, which is above the acceptable limit of .50 (Field, 2013). Barlett’s test of sphericity showed that correlations between items were significantly different from zero, $\chi^2(45, N = 790) = 2495.71, p < .001$, and therefore, sufficiently large for factor analysis (Field, 2013). The EFA yielded a two-factor solution, although inspection of the scree plot and the factor matrix suggested that the data would be better explained by a one-factor solution. Moreover, Item 10 (“I think it is very wrong to force a dating partner to have sex on a date”) did not reach the minimum factor loading of .40, the communality was too small (.04), and correlation coefficients with the other scale’s items were also small (between .02 and .17). In

addition, reliability analysis showed that the Corrected Item-Total Correlation (CITC) for this item was .13 (below the recommended .30; Field, 2013) and the Cronbach's α rose from .69 up to .83 when this item is deleted. Thus, the EFA was again conducted without this item and the results showed a one-factor solution (considering both the eigenvalues and the scree plot) that accounted for 41.25% of the variance. Factor loadings, CITC, means and standard deviations are shown in Table 2.

Next, CFA was conducted to verify the validity of the one-factor structure suggested by EFA. Therefore, we tested the hypothesis that all items from the ADV loaded on one general factor, and all the measurement error terms associated with each item were uncorrelated. The fit indices obtained from the one-factor solution were adequate, $S-B \chi^2 (27, N = 789) = 52.23, p < .01, CFI = .99, NNFI = .99, RMSEA = .034, 90\% CI [.020, .048], SRMR = .046$; and all the factor loadings were statistically significant (see Table 3). The internal-consistency coefficient for the final 9-item ADV scale was $\alpha = .83$.

Multi-Group confirmatory factor analysis across gender and relationship status

Model fit to the data was adequate for both girls, $S-B \chi^2 (27, N = 393) = 34.42, p = .22, CFI = 1.00, NNFI = .99, RMSEA = .023, 90\% CI [.000, .048], SRMR = .058$; and boys, $S-B \chi^2 (27, N = 396)$

$= 42.20, p < .05, CFI = .99, NNFI = .99, RMSEA = .038, 90\% CI [.012, .059], SRMR = .053$. All the factor loadings were statistically significant for both genders (see Table 3). Table 4 presents the fit statistics for testing the configural invariance of the model and the factor loadings. The constriction of invariance of factor loadings caused $S-B \chi^2$ to increase significantly. However, the change in CFI was .004 and, therefore, within the cut-off of .01 proposed by Cheung and Rensvold (2002). Thus, invariance in the factor loadings across gender was tenable.

With respect to relationship status, model fit to the data was also adequate both for those who had been in a dating relationship in the previous year, $S-B \chi^2 (27, N = 531) = 52.80, p < .01, CFI = 0.990, NNFI = .986, RMSEA = .042, 90\% CI [.025, .059], SRMR = .057$; and for those who had not, $S-B \chi^2 (27, N = 258) = 46.50, p < .05, CFI = .990, NNFI = .987, RMSEA = .053, 90\% CI [.025, .078], SRMR = .059$. All the factor loadings were statistically significant for both subsamples (see Table 3). Invariance in the factor loadings across subsamples was tenable (see Table 4).

Convergent validity evidence

Correlation coefficients between acceptance of DV and general justification of violence ($r = .48$), DV perpetration ($r = .37$) and DV

	Factor loading	CITC ^a	M	SD
Item 1	.66	.57	1.13	0.57
Item 2	.65	.60	1.31	0.85
Item 3	.71	.61	1.08	0.43
Item 4	.67	.63	1.18	0.62
Item 5	.77	.67	1.13	0.56
Item 6	.63	.55	1.14	0.59
Item 7	.45	.42	1.64	1.18
Item 8	.66	.60	1.17	0.66
Item 9	.53	.49	1.32	0.87

^a CITC = Corrected Item-Total Correlation

	Total sample	Gender		Relationship status ^a	
		Girls (n = 393)	Boys (n = 396)	Yes (n = 531)	No (n = 258)
Item 1	.66	.49	.73	.66	.68
Item 2	.49	.57	.46	.52	.39
Item 3	.58	.37	.65	.54	.78
Item 4	.72	.67	.73	.69	.85
Item 5	.71	.72	.70	.69	.79
Item 6	.56	.46	.57	.51	.66
Item 7	.46	.35	.54	.48	.40
Item 8	.73	.68	.72	.73	.73
Item 9	.56	.51	.57	.51	.69

Note: All the factor loadings were statistically significant ($p < .001$)
^a Having had a dating relationship in the previous year

Model tested	$S-B \chi^2$	df	p	$\Delta S-B \chi^2$	Δdf	p	RMSEA	RMSEA 90% CI	CFI	ΔCFI
Invariance tests across gender										
Configural invariance	74.29	54	< .05	–	–	–	.031	.009 - .047	.994	–
Invariance of factor loadings	100.49	63	< .01	19.7	9	< .05	.039	.024 - .053	.990	.004
Invariance tests across relationship status										
Configural invariance	100.32	54	< .001	–	–	–	.047	.032 - .061	.990	–
Invariance of factor loadings	98.85	63	< .01	-6.27	9	= .71	.038	.023 - .052	.992	-.002

Note: $\Delta S-B \chi^2$ = Satorra-Bentler scaled difference calculated using the Crawford & Henry's (2003) test

victimization ($r = .33$) were all statistically significant ($p < .001$). Considering participants' gender, we found similar coefficients for the correlation between acceptance of DV and general justification of violence ($r = .46$ and $r = .45$, for girls and boys, respectively). However, correlations with DV were significantly higher for boys than girls for both perpetration ($r = .52$ and $r = .15$, respectively; $z = 6.9, p < .001$), and victimization ($r = .44$ and $r = .15$, respectively; $z = 5.21, p < .001$).

Gender and relationship status differences

Boys scored higher than girls on acceptance of DV ($M = 1.33$ and $M = 1.14$, respectively), $t(1186) = 8.03, p < .001$. Moreover, justification of DV was higher for participants who had had a dating relationship in the past year ($M = 1.25$) compared to those who had not ($M = 1.20$), $t(1268) = 2.29, p < .001$.

Discussion

The main objective of this study was to gather validity evidence of the ADV scale in a sample of Spanish adolescents. The results showed that the ADV has adequate psychometric properties regarding validity and reliability. Factor analyses suggested a one-factor structure of the scale, which fits data well for both genders and both for adolescents who had been in a relationship in the previous year and those who had not. The final scale was composed of nine items assessing proscribed dating abuse norms, as the item referring to proscribed dating abuse norms (negatively worded) was deleted because it did not perform well. This type of wording effect was also found in other research areas when using scales with a combination of negatively and positively worded items (Wichström & von Soest, 2016).

The ADV scores were significantly related to general justification of violence and DV perpetration and victimization, which is consistent with previous research (Karlsson et al., 2016; Josephson & Proulx, 2008). Regarding participants' gender, we found a higher acceptance of DV and a stronger correlation between attitudes and behaviour for boys. These results were also found in previous studies (Foshee et al., 2001; Karlsson et al., 2016; Torres et al., 2012) and indicate that boys hold the belief to a greater extent than girls that the use of aggression toward the partner is justified under certain circumstances. Moreover,

boys' behaviour seems to be more consistent with their cognitive schemas than girls' behaviour, as girls justify aggression to a lesser extent than boys but display similar rates of aggression (e.g., O'Leary & Slep, 2003). It would be of interest for future studies to investigate the origin and mechanisms related to this greater cognitive dissonance shown by girls. A possible explanation might be related to the fact that aggression by female partners has less severe consequences (Straus, 2011) and it might be seen to be less harmful than aggression by male partners. However, aggression by the female partner increases the likelihood of her being a victim of aggression by her male partner (O'Leary & Slep, 2003). Preventive interventions should increase teenage awareness of the dyadic influences of aggression and convey the idea that aggression is never justified as a means to solve conflicts.

Adolescents that had a dating relationship in the past year scored higher in acceptance of DV than those who had not had one, which suggests that cognitive schemas could be modified based on experience or as a mechanism to minimize the cognitive dissonance arising from the inconsistency between their attitudes and actual behaviours (Festinger, 1957). These findings are relevant for the design and timing of preventive programs. Interventions in early adolescence could address this type of normative attitudes before teens begin dating.

The main study limitation is related to sample representativeness. All participants came from the province of Bizkaia and, therefore, the findings may not be generalizable to adolescents from other Spanish regions. Another limitation arises from the fact that this study relied on self-reports taken in a group classroom setting, which may have biased participants' reports because of social desirability. Beyond the study limitations, we can conclude that our findings show that the Spanish version of the ADV is a useful instrument with adequate psychometric properties for assessing attitudes to physical and sexual DV. Its advantages include the fact that it is a brief and easily applicable instrument. The adolescents had no difficulties to complete it and they responded swiftly. Moreover, it assesses justification of DV when the perpetrator is either male or female. The ADV can be used in different areas of research into attitudes toward DV, such as for example, the nature of such attitudes, their relationship with aggressive behaviour, or the effectiveness of DV prevention programs to modify cognitive variables. For this latter purpose, future studies should examine its sensitivity to change.

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