



Research Article

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Personality and Attitudes towards Machismo as Predictors of Sexual Harassment in University Students in Northern Peru

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Abstract

The objective of the study was to determine to what extent personality and attitudes towards machismo predict sexual harassment in a sample of 470 university students in Chiclayo. The research is a predictive, cross-sectional, non-experimental research. The instruments applied were the Big Five Personality Inventory (BFI), the Attitudes towards Machismo Scale and the Sexual Harassment and Social Interaction with Sexual Content in the University Environment Scale (EASIS-U), which were virtualized through "google forms". The results indicate that all significance indices, statistical power and effect size are adequate. Therefore, in women, neuroticism and macho attitudes towards male chauvinism explain 12.5% of sextortion. And for men, extraversion, macho attitudes towards home management and sex role socialization explain 13.5% of verbal sexual harassment.

Keywords: Personality, machismo, sexual harassment, university students

1. Introduction

Sexual harassment occurs in all known cultures (Hudson, 2017). It is characterized by pervasive sexist comments, hostile behaviors and sexual advances that can include sexual aggression and coercion (National Academies of Sciences, Engineering Engineering, and Medicine, 2018), as well as the use of unequal power (Lee, Song & Kim, 2011; Ministry of Women and Vulnerable Populations - MIMP, 2017), unwanted touching, which are considered unacceptable or illegal in most countries around the world. However, these inappropriate behaviors occur frequently (Phillips, Webber, Imbeau, Quaipe, Hagan, Maar, & Abourbih, 2019).

Recent studies refer that sexual harassment is a widespread problem (Kane-Urrabazo, 2007; Wood, Hoefler, Kammer-Kerwick, Parra-Cardona, Busch-Armendariz, 2018) occurring at the workplace, in politics and higher education, where women and men suffered harassment at some point (Binder, Garcia, Johnson & Fuentes-Afflick, 2018).

Within the university context, the presence of sexual harassment is related to the presence of abuse of power and subordination, putting the victim at a disadvantage, where female students have a higher incidence of being sexually harassed (Ramirez and Barajas, 2017), which may be due to stereotypes devaluing women for their domestic work, motherhood or family care, disguised as insinuations for their physical attributes and undermining their abilities and skills (Flores and Espejel, 2015). Likewise, sexual harassment in university students can cause victims to have learning limitations and can negatively affect their mental health (McClain, Kammer-Kerwick, Wood, Temple & Busch-Armendariz, 2021), as well as generate risk behaviors, such as increased consumption of alcohol and drugs (Turchik & Hassija, 2014).

This problem among students generated interest and concern among researchers and organizations involved in defending human rights. Thus, the Universidad Austral de Chile (2018) published a diagnostic report on gender and diversity, highlighting that women suffer in greater proportion harassment or sexual harassment than men. In Peru, 175 complaints of sexual harassment in universities were recorded, 91% of them were towards women, with the harasser being a teacher (Grupo El Comercio, 2020). In 2018, the National Superintendence of University Higher Education (SUNEDU, by its Spanish initials) carried out 157 investigations referring to sexual harassment, reporting 101 cases in private universities and 56 in public universities. As a consequence several universities were sanctioned for inaction or failures when confronting sexual harassment cases (Buendía, 2020).

Therefore, it is important to consider sexual harassment as a clear manifestation of aggression that violates the rights and dignity of human beings, as it undermines their mental health and personal well-being, disrupting their personality (Law No. 27942, 2009). This aggression comes from the expression of a sexist action not consented by the victim, causing an intimidating and degrading environment that can negatively influence the development of work, training or other (Ombudsman's Office, 2019).

In this regard, several research studies have focused on identifying the factors that can predict sexual harassment, and one of the most important factors is personality. Since personality is a construct with primordial and behavioral characteristics, based on experiences, emotions and motivations of each person making it unique (McCrae & Costa, 2004), it is important to evaluate the personality factors associated with sexual harassment. In a study it was found that extraversion seems to be the trait most related to suffering sexual victimization, and that sensation seeking and impulsivity related to openness and extraversion are possibly characteristics of people who live situations of sexual violation. In addition, it was found that female victims have higher scores in neuroticism, agreeableness and extroversion in relation to males (Álvares & Pueyo, 2013).

Furthermore, another factor that can predict sexual harassment in university students is macho behaviors. This factor is conceptualized as the sum of behaviors, ideas and attitudes that confront feminine and masculine roles, going to the extreme of excluding one from the other, highlighting the supremacy of men over women (Castañeda, 2007). Men's sexual control refers to the authority and

dominance over his own and his partner's sexuality, assigning a passive and permissive image to women in terms of the partner's sexual decisions and infidelity behaviors (De La Cruz and Morales, 2015).

In order to explain the predictors of sexual harassment in university students, Véliz and Valenzuela (2020) concluded that it can be predicted by variables such as female sex and low self-esteem. However, the explanation of the problem is more related to machismo. In addition, the study conducted by Aguaded (2017) analyzes and detects sexist profiles and ideas as predictors of sexual harassment. This study showed higher scores of sexist manifestations in male students, defending the position that young people maintain sexist stereotypes that fuel gender violence, while most women express rejection of sexist ideas in relation to sexual freedom (Cardona, Casas, Cañon, Castaño, Godoy, Henao, & Valencia, 2015).

Therefore, it is of great importance for the scientific community to know the factors or variables that predict sexual harassment in the university context in order to generate prevention and intervention strategies. To this end, the objective was to determine to what extent personality and attitudes towards machismo predict sexual harassment in university students in northern Peru.

2. Methodology

2.1 Type and Design of Research

The type of research is basic, since it aims to extend knowledge by assimilating the fundamental aspects of the various phenomena of a specific problem (Barriga, 1974). The design is predictive, cross-sectional and non-experimental, since the variables were not manipulated, only the phenomena were observed as they occurred. The predictive strategy was used because the objective was to explore the functional relationship through the prognosis of the criterion variable from its respective predictors. It is cross-sectional, given that the information was collected at a single point in time (Ato, López and Benavente, 2013).

2.2 Sample

The population consisted of male and female students from 5 private and licensed universities in the city of Chiclayo, enrolled in a professional program in the 2021-I academic semester, from the first semester to the last semester. The sample consisted of 470 students. A non-probabilistic sample was used, with a purposive sampling, since we worked with university students who agreed to participate voluntarily by answering the virtual questionnaires through google forms and sent them by e-mail. This method allowed us to know how the study variables are developing in the given sample (Ventura-León, 2017).

2.3 Instruments

The instruments used were the Big Five Personality Inventory - BFI by John, Donahue, and Kentle, which aims to identify personality characteristics based on the dimensional model of the big five factors. It reveals 5 traits from the set of behavioral propensities at the cognitive and affective level of the person, from the way of reacting and relating to others. Domínguez & Merino (2018) in Lima, developed a reduced version adapted to the Peruvian context (37 items). Bustamante's (1990) Scale of Attitudes towards Machismo was also used, which aims to identify macho attitudes, evidenced by the set of beliefs shared by a given culture, and to keep the female figure subjugated to the male supremacy in all aspects. The instrument has 59 items, which are distributed in 5 dimensions. As a last instrument, we worked with the Sexual Harassment and Social Interaction with Sexual Content in the University Environment Scale (EASIS-U), whose objective is to evaluate the presence of sexual harassment. It is based on the pyramidal theoretical model consisted in four steps called factors that

explain sexual harassment (Navarro, Ferrer & Bosch. 2016). It presents 38 items that detail different behaviors of social interaction of sexual content and sexual harassment.

Prior to the execution of this research, the process of content validity of the instruments used was carried out according to the judges' criteria, finding a broad agreement among their opinions, which shows the relevance, coherence and pertinence of each item ($V > .70$).

2.4 Data Analysis

A multiple regression was performed using the stepwise method. Personality traits and the dimensions of attitudes towards machismo were considered as predictors of sexual harassment. Prior to the regression analysis, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was implemented to determine whether the data followed a normal distribution. It was verified that they did not follow a normal distribution, since they presented p -values < 0.01 . The results were organized and presented in tables in accordance with the proposed objective.

2.5 Ethical Criteria

During the research process, the principle of autonomy was complied with by sending the informed consent, and the research objectives, purposes, instruments to be used and how the results were used, highlighting the maintenance of confidentiality in the research process and the free participation in the study. It was also specified that they could make consultations in case of doubt in the execution process through calls, text messages or emails. In addition, the principle of beneficence was complied with, since those who requested it were provided with the results obtained by means of emails, thus they benefited from the results of the evaluations carried out. In accordance with the principle of nonmaleficence, the research does not represent any physical or psychological risk for the participants.

3. Results

To find out whether sextortion is predicted by personality traits and attitudes towards machismo, a stepwise regression was performed. The results found show that all significance indices ($.01$ and $.05$), statistical power and effect size are adequate, and that attitudes towards home management predict 4.6% of sextortion in men. In the case of women, traits of neuroticism and attitudes towards male superiority predict 12.5% of sextortion (Table 1).

Table 1: Regression coefficient of personality traits and attitudes towards machismo with respect to sextortion, according to sex

<i>Models (men)</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>ΔR²</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Standard error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>P</i>
Model 1	5.24 (1,108)	0.046	0.037				0.02
Attitudes towards home management				-0.255	0.111	-0.215	0.02
<i>Models (women)</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>ΔR²</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Standard error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>P</i>
Model 1	28.04 (1,358)	0.073	0.070				,001
Neuroticism				0.483	0.091	0.270	,001
Model 2	25.47 (2,357)	0.125	0.120				,001
Neuroticism				0.501	0.089	0.280	,001
Attitude towards male superiority				-0.246	0.053	-0.229	,001

Likewise, to demonstrate whether verbal sexual harassment is predicted by personality traits and attitudes towards machismo, a stepwise regression was performed. The results found that all significance indices ($.01$ and $.05$), statistical power and effect size are adequate, and that extraversion,

attitudes towards home management and attitudes towards sex role socialization predict 13.5% of verbal sexual harassment in men. With respect to women, the dimensions of attitudes towards male superiority and neuroticism predict 7.4% of verbal sexual harassment (Table 2).

Table 2: Regression coefficient of personality traits and attitudes towards machismo with respect to verbal sexual harassment, according to sex

<i>Models (men)</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>ΔR²</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Standard error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1	5.50 (3,106)	0.135	0.110				,001
Extraversion				0.14	0.06	0.20	0.03
Attitude towards home management				-0.26	0.09	-0.70	,001
Attitude towards sex role socialization.				0.18	0.09	0.49	0.04
Model 2	6.06 (2,107)	0.102	0.085				,003
Extraversion				0.132	0.063	0.193	0.04
Attitude towards home management				-0.09	0.03	-0.25	0.01
Model 3	7.45 (1,108)	0.065	0.056				,007
Attitude towards home management				-0.09	0.03	-0.25	0.01
<i>Models (women)</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>ΔR²</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Standard error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1	13.40 (1,358)	0.036	0.033				,001
Attitudes towards male superiority				-0.058	0.016	-0.190	,001
Model 2	14.32 (2,357)	0.074	0.069				,001
Attitudes towards male superiority				-0.061	0.016	-0.199	,001
Neuroticism				0.099	0.026	0.196	,001

To show whether physical sexual harassment is predicted by personality traits and attitudes toward machismo, a stepwise regression was performed. The results show that all significance indices (.01 and .05), statistical power, and effect size are adequate, and that attitudes towards home management 3.6% of physical sexual harassment in men. In women, traits of neuroticism and attitudes towards male superiority predict 8.4% of physical sexual harassment (Table 3).

Table 3: Regression coefficient of personality and attitudes towards machismo with respect to physical sexual harassment, according to sex

<i>Models (men)</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>ΔR²</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Standard error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1	3.99 (1,108)	0.036	0.027				,048
Attitude towards home management				-0.09	0.04	-0.19	,048
<i>Models (women)</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>R²</i>	<i>ΔR²</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>Standard error</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>p</i>
Model 1	20.19 (1,358)	0.053	0.051				,001
Neuroticism Dimension				0.176	0.039	0.231	,001
Model 2	16.37 (2,357)	0.084	0.079				,001
Neuroticism				0.183	0.039	0.239	,001
Attitudes towards male superiority				-0.080	0.023	-0.175	,001

Finally, to find out whether social interaction behavior with sexual content is predicted by personality traits and attitudes towards machismo, a stepwise regression was performed. The results show that all significance indices (.01 and .05), statistical power, and effect size are adequate, and that attitudes towards home management and extraversion predict 9.2% of the interaction behavior of sexual content in men. Likewise, attitudes towards male superiority and extraversion predict 7.7% of the interaction behaviors of sexual content in women (Table 4).

Table 4: Regression coefficient of personality traits and attitudes towards machismo with respect to social interaction behavior with sexual content, according to sex

Models (men)	F	R ²	ΔR ²	B	Standard error	B	p
Model 1	5.40 (1,108)	0.048	0.039				
Attitudes towards home management				-0.089	0.038	-0.218	0.02
Model 2	5.43 (2,107)	0.092	0.075				0.01
Attitudes towards home management				-0.087	0.038	-0.214	0.02
Extraversion				0.160	0.070	0.211	0.02
Models (women)	F	R ²	ΔR ²	B	Standard error	B	p
Model 1	14.17 (1,358)	0.038	0.035				,001
Attitudes towards male superiority				-0.080	0.021	-0.195	,001
Model 2	14.83 (2,357)	0.077	0.072				,001
Attitudes towards male superiority				-0.083	0.021	-0.204	,001
Extraversion				0.134	0.035	0.197	,001

4. Discussion

When analyzing the results, it is found in model 1 (men) that attitudes towards home management significantly predict sextortion, indicating that men's rejection to supervise authoritatively women's housework at home explain the few experiences related to strong coercive behaviors for sexual intimacy against their will. In model 2 (women), traits of neuroticism and attitudes towards male superiority are found to significantly predict sextortion. Specifically, traits of hostility, impulsivity and emotional instability explain a greater presence of behaviors linked to sextortion. On the contrary, rejection of disparity in terms of ability, disqualifying women in the performance of complex tasks, explain the few experiences of unwanted coercive behaviors for sexual intimacy.

These results are corroborated by the study conducted by Véliz and Valenzuela (2020), who significantly highlight that aspects such as machismo, explain sexual harassment in a university environment. In addition, it coincides with the research conducted by Aguaded (2017), who detected sexist profiles and ideas as predictors of sexual harassment in a university context. Therefore, assuming that attitudes towards machismo could explain sextortion in the case of men, and the trait of neuroticism with attitudes towards male superiority, in the case of women, is supported by Bustamante (1990) in his theory of attitudes towards machismo by conceptualizing them as the set of beliefs, aimed to keep women subdued, in all aspects, by men. Similarly, the results found are supported by the dimensional model of the five big factors of personality, which refers to the set of behavioral propensities presented by human beings and is related to environmental, situational and inheritable aspects (McCrae & Costa, 2004). Based on the above, it can be concluded that, in both men and women, the presence of preferences and traits related to lack of control of emotions, hostility and impulsivity and the rejection of attitudes that keep women subjugated explain the presence of experiences linked to strong behaviors of unwanted sexual coercion.

The aforementioned results coincide with the study conducted by Álvares and Pueyo (2013), who conclude that extraversion seems to be the trait most related to sexual victimization and that possibly the characteristics related to sensation seeking explain the experience of situations of sexual violation. Similarly, it is supported by the research conducted by Véliz and Valenzuela (2020) when concluding that one of the predictor variables of sexual harassment would be machismo, and by the study conducted by Aguaded (2017), who found sexist beliefs as predictors of sexual harassment. Ramírez and Barajas (2017) agree with the results found in this study and specify that the existence of sexual harassment would be related to machismo beliefs referring to the abuse of power and supposed superiority, putting the victim at a disadvantage, thereby explaining that the rejection of attitudes towards machismo predicts verbal sexual harassment. Flores and Espejel (2015) refer that sexist practices, especially those that maintain stereotypes putting women down because of their

domestic work, are related to sexual harassment, disguised as verbal insinuations based on their physical attributes and undermining their capabilities.

Likewise, Cardona et al. (2015) in their study expose the rejection of macho attitudes that subordinate their sexual freedom. Therefore, the foregoing supports the results found in this study, both for men and women, as it shows that the rejection of macho attitudes that highlight male supremacy over decisions and household responsibilities and sexual role aspects, as well as the traits of sociability, emergence, sensation seeking, in the case of men, and impulsivity, hostility and vulnerability in the case of women, explain sexual verbal harassment linked to indecent expressions and jokes with non-consensual morbid intent.

The results show that, according to the stepwise regression, in model 1 (men), attitudes towards home management significantly predict physical sexual harassment, showing that the rejection of men's dominant and authoritarian supervision of women at home, limiting their capacity and responsibility for autonomy and decision making, explains the few experiences related to unwanted touching of any part of the body. Model 2 (women) highlights that traits of neuroticism and attitudes towards male superiority significantly predict physical sexual harassment, indicating that the lack of emotional control, hostility, anxiety that hinders emotional adaptation and negative emotions, explain a large number of situations related to unwanted touching of any part of the body. Rejection of male supremacy and disparity in terms of capacity, responsibility and autonomy, putting women at a disadvantage, explains few situations of unwanted touching.

Thus, the abovementioned analysis is supported by the research conducted by Véliz and Valenzuela (2020), when specifying that sexual harassment is predicted by variables such as machismo, and also they agree with what was stated by Ramírez and Barajas (2017) when referring that the presence of sexual harassment is related to macho attitudes linked to the abuse of power and male superiority, and that women demonstrate their rejection of macho behaviors and beliefs linked to sexual freedom (Cardona et al., 2015). The Universidad Austral de Chile - UACH (2018) in its diagnostic report on gender and diversity, stage 2, specified the presence of sexual harassment in the university context, linked, in greater proportion, to friction and unwanted physical contact.

Although there are few studies that conclude that machismo or personality traits are predictors of sexual harassment, research has been found and it indicates a relationship between these variables. Therefore, it could be inferred from the results presented in this research that the rejection of macho attitudes, specifically those related to abuse of power, inequality and authoritarianism towards women in the development of their activities and responsibilities at home and academic achievements, as well as the traits of impulsivity, hostility and negative emotions linked to sexual victimization, explain the presence of physical sexual harassment, characterized by touching or rubbing without the victim's consent, violating her dignity, both in male and female university students.

The analysis based on the results found in this study is supported by the theory of attitudes towards machismo proposed by Bustamante (1990), who conceptualizes them as a set of beliefs aimed to keep women subdued in all aspects. It is also based on the dimensional model of the five big factors of personality, and it proposes that this set of characteristics and behavioral propensities presented by human beings is related to environmental, situational and inheritable aspects (McCrae & Costa, 2004). This means that the rejection of the beliefs of inequality between men and women, in which the subjugation of women predominates, and the personality traits that are also constituted by environmental aspects, explain the physical sexual harassment, characterized by behaviors that exceed the limits of respect, favoring touching and friction not consented by the victims, men and women, in the university context.

With regard to stepwise regression, in model 2 (men), attitudes towards home management and extraversion significantly predict social interaction behavior with sexual content, demonstrating that the rejection of men's authoritarian supervision of women's housework, which limits their capacity and autonomy in household responsibilities, explains the lower presence of sexual and voluntary behaviors originating in the academic context. Conversely, traits of cordiality, sociability in the

relationship with others and sensation seeking explain a greater presence of these behaviors. The results in model 2 (women) show that attitudes towards male superiority and extraversion significantly predict social interaction behavior with sexual content, indicating that the rejection of disparity in terms of capacity, which disqualifies women by positioning them below the men, putting down their abilities and skills, explains a lower presence of voluntary interaction behavior with sexual connotation. Traits linked to optimism, politeness, dynamic approach through affectionate communication with others and sensation seeking explain a greater presence of voluntary sexual initiation behaviors in the academic environment.

It is suggested then that what has been analyzed is corroborated by the study conducted by Álvares and Pueyo (2013), who found that extraversion is the trait most related to aspects of sexual victimization and the risk behaviors it entails. Similarly, it coincides with the results of Véliz and Valenzuela (2020) in specifying that aspects such as machismo explain sexual harassment and its related behaviors. Ramírez and Barajas (2017) specify that the existence of sexual harassment and the behaviors it entails are related to attitudes that denote the presence of abuse of power and subordination of women. This would indicate that the presence of voluntary behaviors carried out in the university context and of sexual content by women and men would be explained through the rejection of macho attitudes towards home management, and traits predominantly linked to sensation seeking and the preference for the approach and direct contact with others. It should be noted that the above analysis is supported by the theory proposed by Bustamante (1990), who states that attitudes toward machismo are a set of beliefs aimed at keeping women subjected to men, and by the dimensional model of the five big factors of personality, which argues that this is the set of behavioral propensities presented by human beings and is related to environmental, situational and inheritable aspects (McCrae & Costa, 2004). Aspects related to sexual harassment are based on the multifactorial pyramidal theoretical model, which proposes that there are different steps called factors that would explain the presence of experiences related to sexual harassment (Navarro et al., 2016).

5. Conclusion

It is concluded that, in women, neuroticism and the rejection of macho attitudes towards male superiority explain sextortion. In men, extraversion, macho attitudes towards home management and sex role socialization explain verbal sexual harassment.

Likewise, in both genders the personality they present leads to predict sexual harassment, so it is important that personalized interventions can be considered according to gender to reduce sexual harassment.

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