

## Assessing sexism in a sample of Mexican students: A validity analysis based on the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory

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*The first aim of this study was to assess the psychometric properties (structure, dimensionality and accuracy of measurement) of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI: Glick and Fiske, 1996) in the Spanish version (Expósito et al., 1998) for its use in the Mexican context. Secondly, it was assessed whether the variables sex and socio-economical status were related to the sexist attitudes. Analyses were carried out based on a sample of 396 university students. Results confirmed the cross-cultural invariance and appropriate psychometric properties of the ASI in the Mexican sample. Furthermore, both sex and socio-economical status were found to be related to certain sub-dimensions of sexism.*

*Keywords: Ambivalent Sexism Inventory, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, sexism and sex, sexism and socio-economical status.*

## Evaluación del sexismo en una muestra de universitarios mexicanos: Un estudio de validez basado en el Inventario de Sexismo Ambivalente (ASI)

*El objetivo inicial de este estudio fue evaluar las propiedades psicométricas (estructura, dimensionalidad y precisión en la medida) del inventario de sexismo ambivalente (ASI: Glick y Fiske, 1996) en su versión española (Expósito et al., 1998) para su utilización en México. En segundo lugar se evaluó si las variables sexo y status socioeconómico estaban relacionadas con las actitudes sexistas en dicho país. Los análisis se basaron en una muestra de 396 estudiantes universitarios. Los resultados confirmaron la invariancia transcultural del ASI e indicaron que las propiedades de medida*

*en la muestra Mexicana eran razonablemente buenas. Ambas variables: sexo y estatus socioeconómico estaban relacionadas con los niveles en ciertas subdimensiones de sexismo.*

*Palabras clave: Inventario de Sexismo Ambivalente, sexismo hostil, sexismo benevolente, sexismo y sexo, sexismo y estatus socioeconómico.*

## **Introduction**

The World Health Organization (June, 2013) affirms that violence against women is a global health problem with epidemic proportions which affects more than a third of all women around the world. This information was published in a report in collaboration with the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine and the South African Medical Research Council. More specifically, in Mexico, violence against women reaches substantial magnitudes: 46 out of 100 women older than 15 years suffer physical, psychological or economic, sexual violence (even death in some cases). This was revealed by the National Survey on Household Relationship Dynamics (ENDIREH, 2011), the INEGI and the National Institution for Women (INMUJERES). These organizations established that this kind of violence is based on discrimination, submission and control exerted upon women in all areas of their lives.

Gender-based violence cannot be reduced without taking into account the inequalities suffered by women which take their power away. To understand the perception of women in society as a whole, in 1999 the National Women's Program and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) looked at gender stereotypes of women in Mexico. They found that common stereotypes included 'delicate', 'fragile', 'weak', 'take care of the children', 'loving', 'pure' and 'beautiful', but also 'dangerous', 'manipulative', 'liars' and 'aggressive'. Now, with regards to these results, a question arises as to whether such different perceptions as 'fragile' and 'manipulative' can be part of a unitary view.

Regarding violence against women, in relation with the "expected social roles", the ENDIREH (2011) revealed that 29.0% of the consulted women said that they agreed with the fact that "if there are hits or maltreatment, that is a family matter and there it should remain"; 16.8% declared that they believe "wives must obey their husbands or partner in everything they command"; and 14.7% think that "it is a woman's duty to have sexual relations with her husband or partner".

The national report on Gender Violence in Basic Education in Mexico, presented to the secretary of Public education at UNICEF in April (2010), showed that stereotypes reinforce gender assignment of activities even from early childhood, and that those gender stereotypes are more firmly rooted in boys than girls. They then develop discriminatory behavior and in turn, the sexism and the gender violence are derived from this.

The starting points adopted in this study with regards to the problems so far discussed are that (a) the way women are perceived influences greatly gender violence, and (b) one of the main predictors of gender violence is the level of sexism that a person has.

The classical view of sexism was summarized by Allport (1954), who defined a negative attitude towards women, the function of which was to reduce them to an inferior status. Classic sexism, also defined as 'old', 'hostile' or 'old fashioned', is so based on a supposed inferiority or differences in women as a group, and is an attitude of prejudiced or discriminatory conduct (Cameron, 1977). These old sexist beliefs influence judgments, evaluations and personal behavior, usually occurring towards the opposite sex.

Lameiras and Rodriguez (2003) describe sexism as an attitude towards people by virtue of their biological sex. According to this, different characteristics and behaviors will be adopted. These definitions always discover the dominance of the masculine sex over the feminine one. However, nowadays old ways of sexism must be distinguished from the new ones.

According to Glick and Fiske (1996), gender ideology is made of two components, clearly distinct but interrelated: Hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. The first is basically the same as classic sexism and is composed by a set of prejudice attitudes or discriminatory conducts based on the supposed inferiority or women's difference as a group (Glick & Fiske, 1996). On the other hand, benevolent sexism consists of a series of interrelated attitudes towards women, applying stereotypes and limiting them to certain roles, whilst simultaneously affecting a positive tone around women, which is especially raised during social gatherings and when hoping for intimacy. Glick and Fiske (1996, 2001) proposed also three different sub-categories or components within both hostile sexism and benevolent sexism: Protective paternalism, the complementary gender differentiation and heterosexual intimacy.

The proposal summarized above was defined a priori based only on theoretical grounds. Empirical research based on 2250 participants, however, was able to distinguish the three sub-factors of benevolent sexism but, no evidence for any sub-factors of hostile sexism was found. On the basis of these results, Glick and Fiske (1996) proposed an inventory (to be discussed below) which explored hostile sexism as a single entity and benevolent sexism in three components.

As discussed above, we view sexism as an important predictor of gender violence. If so, a precise assessment of sexism is a basic requirement if programs for the prevention of gender violence are to be improved. A review of the literature, however, indicates that in Mexico, despite having one of the highest numbers of gender violence related deaths, there is very little research into sexism as a predictor of gender violence.

An assessment of the type discussed above requires as a starting point to develop a valid and reliable measure or to try an already existing instrument. As

discussed in the next section, the best psychometric tool in the literature, which has been replicated in Spanish, is, in our opinion, Glick and Fiske's (1996, 2001) Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI). Other related measures are the scales that propose to measure traditional attitudes about gender relations (Spence & Helmreich, 1972), the scales of modern sexism (Swim, Aikin, Hall & Hunter, 1995), and the scale of Neosexism (Tougas, Brown, Beaton & Joly, 1995) all of which address issues related with interpersonal relations. There is also a scale representing sexual machismo, published by Diaz, Rosas and Gonzalez (2010). With regards to these instruments, the main strength of the ASI lies in its exploration of an additional form of sexism, benevolent sexism, which is not considered in any of the aforementioned tools.

### ***Description of the Test and Need of the First Study***

The ASI was initially developed by Glick and Fiske in 1996 to measure the ambivalence of men towards women. The scale consisted of 22 items grouped into a single factor of Hostile sexism, and a factor of Benevolent sexism which was further divided into the three sub-factors of protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation and heterosexual intimacy.

The Spanish ASI version was developed by Moya and Glick (1998). This version was different from the English original in that all items pointed towards the same direction. Moya and Glick (1998) found that the Spanish version maintained the good psychometric properties of the original English version.

Glick and co-workers (2000) next undertook an ambitious validation study of the ASI in 16 countries: Australia, Belgium, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Cuba, the EU, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Japan, Netherlands, Nigeria, Portugal, South Africa and Turkey. The study was limited to University students, but overall provided evidence to support the proposition that hostile sexism and benevolent sexism are cross-cultural ideologies and that the ASI is a valid and reliable instrument for measuring these components. Comparisons with other sexism scales have shown adequate convergent validity for the scale of hostile sexism and acceptable discriminant validity for the scale of benevolent sexism (Glick and Fiske, 2001).

Validity studies for the ASI Spanish version have been undertaken in several countries with appropriate results (Cardenas, Lay, Gonzalez, Calderon & Alegria, 2010; Exposito, Moya, & Glick, 1998; Lameiras & Rodriguez, 2003; Rodriguez, Lameiras & Carrera, 2009; Vaamonde & Omar, 2012). However no studies of this type have been so far carried out in México. Hence, the initial objective of this study is to adapt, validate and explore the psychometric properties of the ASI for use in the Mexican context.

## ***Purposes of the study***

This study has two main objectives. Firstly, to assess the psychometric properties (structure, dimensionality and score reliability) of the ASI as an instrument for measuring sexism in Mexico. Secondly, assuming that the measurement properties are appropriate, to try to assess whether sex and socio-economical status are related to sexist attitudes. With regard to the first aim, the results are expected to be consistent with those obtained in other countries.

With regards to the second aim, a previous distinction between sex and gender is needed. Gender is not just a matter of sex but also a process of psychological and social identification: individuals “make the gender” (Anderson, 2005). In our study we categorize individuals only by their biological sex and so it is only this variable that is related to the levels of sexism. Having made clear this limitation our expectations are that (a) men will score higher than women on both benevolent and hostile sexism, and (b) people with higher socio-economical levels will show lower levels of both benevolent and hostile sexism. These predictions are based on the literature regarding prejudice and discrimination in general (Deaux & LaFrance, 1998; La Mar & Kite, 1998).

## **Method**

### ***Participants and procedure.***

Participants were 396 Mexican university students from the Public University of Tabasco (average age 22 years, 100 men, 288 women and nine who declined to say their gender). Of these, most were graduate students and a minority was enrolled in postgraduate studies. Most of previous research on the ASI was based on university students and we chose this type of sample because we wanted to measure sexism at the higher education level. Furthermore, the chosen institution, being public, has a student body composed of different economic statuses.

The questionnaire was administered in paper and pencil format, in class groups and always by the same person. The administration was voluntary and anonymous and the only data gathered was the reported age and socio-economical status of the participants.

### ***Measures***

The Spanish version of the ASI used in this study is that of Exposito, Moya and Glick, (1998). The inventory is composed of 22 items, with possible answers ranging from 0 (totally disagree) to 5 (totally agree), with the higher scores indicating a higher level of sexism.

Measures used in the second part of the study were sex and socio-economical status. Measures of socio-economical status were self-reported by participants. We asked: ‘What is your socio-economic level?’. There were two alternative answers: medium high and medium low.

## **Analyses and Results**

### ***Overview of Data Analysis***

The study proceeded in three steps. In the first step, we assessed the dimensionality and structure of the ASI. In the second step we assessed the reliability of the ASI scores. In the third step, finally we assessed differences in the levels of sexism amongst groups divided by (a) sex, and (b) socio-economical status.

With respect to the first step, the results of previous studies suggest that the structure of the ASI is bi-factorial, with a general factor of hostile sexism and a factor of benevolent sexism that can be divided into the three components previously discussed. This structure was also obtained in the first Spanish version of the ASI, conducted in Spain.

Despite the prior differentiation just discussed, in our study we have considered a simple and more general structure and tested a bi-factorial solution, (hostile and benevolent), without further distinguishing sub-components in the second factor. There are two basic reasons for this. Firstly, the theory proposes three parallel components in each factor. However, at the empirical level this distinction does not appear in the case of ‘hostile sexism’, thus the proposal of Glick and Fiske is asymmetrical. One factor is not divided and the other is. So, we consider that the general, two factor solution is more balanced and possibly more stable. Second, if in future studies we intend to use the ASI for individual assessment, we shall require a minimum standard of precision that primarily depends on the number of items. If the scale is ‘atomized’ into smaller components, we might risk obtaining results that are too unreliable to meet the desired standard of precision.

The bi-factorial structure of the ASI discussed above was evaluated by using a semi-confirmatory factor-analytic model which was fitted in two phases. First, we evaluated solely the dimensionality hypothesis, by testing first a common model (i.e. a general factor of sexism) followed by canonical models in two and three factors. Second, assuming that the appropriate factor space is bidimensional, the structural hypotheses of two different but related factors of benevolent and hostile sexism was assessed by using an oblique semi-specified Procrustean rotation (Browne, 1972).

Once the factor solution had been determined, we were able to assess the reliability of the test scores in the defined sub-scales.

Finally, in the last part of the analysis, the differences among groups defined by sex and socio-economical level were assessed. In each one of both subscales, the analyses consist on mean comparisons among groups (men vs. women, and medium-high vs. medium-low socio-economical status).

### ***Factor-Analytic Results***

Sampling adequacy was first assessed through Kaiser's KMO test which gave a value of 0.89 (very good according to Kaiser's criterion).

Table 1 shows the results of the assessment of the canonical solutions with 1, 2 and 3 factors. The models were fitted with the unweighted least squares (ULS) criterion as implemented in the FACTOR 9.2 program (Lorenzo-Seva & Ferrando, 2013). Model data fit was assessed with the gamma-GFI index and the root mean square of the standardized residuals (RMSR) which can be regarded as the most suitable indices in the case of ULS estimation (McDonald, 1999).

TABLE 1. DIMENSIONALITY ASSESSMENT OF THE ASI SCORES.

<i>Nº of factors</i>	<i>GFI</i>	<i>RMSR</i>	<i>Critical value</i>
1	.90	.112	.06
2	.98	.055	.06
3	.99	.041	.06

The results in table one suggest that:

- A one dimensional model has an almost acceptable fit.
- A model with two factors provides an excellent fit.
- To fit more than two factors is possibly over-factoring.

In more detail, the first canonical factor had a positive manifold structure with all the loadings positive and above 0.30. The second canonical factor was bipolar (as it should be) and still had some fairly high loadings. However, the third canonical factor was clearly residual and did not reach the minimum of three loadings above 0.30 to consider it as non-negligible (see e.g. McDonald, 1999). Overall, the results just discussed suggest that a proposed structure in two factors is appropriate and that the two factors can be considered to be indicators of a general factor.

We turn now to the structural analyses. The target matrix was specified according to the proposals by Expósito, Glick and Moya (1996), with hostile sexism (which is factor one), and benevolent sexism (factor 2) defined by the following items:

- Factor 1. HS. Items: 2, 4, 5, 7, 10, 11, 14, 15, 16, 18 and 21.
- Factor 2. BS. Items: 1, 3, 6, 8, 9, 12, 13, 17, 19, 20 and 22.

The fit of the semi-specified Procrustes solution, which is shown in table 2, can be considered excellent. The items were all well grouped into the factors prescribed a priori. The Burt-Tucker coefficients of factorial congruence were 0.99 (factor 1), 0.96 (factor 2) and 0,97 (total). The estimated inter-factor correlation was  $r=0.41$ .

TABLE 2. PROCUSTRES SEMI-SPECIFIED PATTERN IN TWO FACTORS.

<i>Item</i>	<i>F 1</i>	<i>F2</i>
1		.671
2	.482	
3		.444
4	.613	
5	.602	
6		.478
7	.566	
8		.506
9		.421
10	.585	
11	.774	
12		.719
13		.780
14	.647	
15	.693	
16	.559	
17		.531
18	.548	
19		.579
20		.579
21	.565	
22		.510

For the sake of completeness we also fitted Glick and Fiske's proposed solution in which BS is separated into three sub-components. The semi-specified rotation was able to obtain a reasonably clear solution which agreed with the proposed target. So, it should be clearly acknowledged that Glick and Fiske's proposal could be also replicated with the present data. However, the obtained solution was not as clear as the bi-dimensional solution in table 2, and, as discussed above, the short scales derived from this solution regarding BS will be expected to provide too unreliable scores to be used in assessment.

### ***Reliability Assessment***

We now turn to the second part of the analysis. Given the appropriateness of the semi-specified solution, we defined the two scales: hostile sexism (HS; 11 items) and benevolent sexism (BS; 11 items) according to the target specification above. The reliability of the scores was estimated by means of a coefficient of equivalence (Cronbach's alpha), and the estimates were 0.86 (HS), 0.83 (BS), and 0.88 for the total scale. These results are in accordance with those obtained in previous studies. Specifically the total-score alphas reported in the most related previous studies are: 0.89 in Spain (Expósito *et al.*, 1998); 0.87 in Argentina (Vaamonde & Omar, 2012) and 0.84 in Chile (Cárdenas *et al.*, 2010). Given the modest number of items, the results suggest that the scale scores have an acceptable degree of measurement accuracy even if they were to be used in individual assessment. In this respect, we note that all the item discrimination indices (corrected item-total correlations) were above 0.25 except for the items 2 (0.21) and 11 (0.24) from the BH scale. This pair of items, whose stems are: «Under the pretext of demanding "equality", many women seek special privileges such as work conditions which benefit them over men» and «Women try to gain power by controlling men», can be considered to form a "doublet" because of the specificity of their content (gaining power or benefits).

### ***Between-Group Comparison Results***

Results of the assessment of mean differences in the HS and BS scores are summarized in table 3a (sex) and 3b (socio-economical status). Means were compared with Student's *t* test and the tables also show the two-tailed exceedance probabilities associated to the corresponding *t* value. Furthermore, given the large power the test has in the case of big samples, the effect sizes (Cohen's *d*) are also reported. As far as sex is concerned, no significant differences in reported HS appear. However, there is a significant difference in BS which goes in the expected direction: men showing higher levels than women. The effect size associated to this difference (0.61) can be qualified as medium/high, and means that the

average difference between men and women is about 2/3 of a (pooled) standard deviation. So, the difference is substantial. With regards to socio-economical status, again no significant differences appear in HS whereas differences appear in BS. In this case the results suggest that the individuals with high socio-economical levels tend to have higher levels of BS. The effect size here is smaller, and the mean difference between groups is about 1/3 of a standard deviation.

TABLE 3. BETWEEN-GROUP COMPARISON RESULTS.

## (a) Sex differences

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>two tailed p.</i>	<i>Effect Size</i>
HS	Men	100	24.14	12.46	0.77	.44 (n.s.)	<i>d</i> =0.61
	Women	288	23.05	11.02			
BS	Men	100	28.70	12.53	5.25	.00	
	Women	288	21.35	11.06			

## (b) Socio-economical status differences

<i>Scale</i>	<i>Group</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>two tailed p.</i>	<i>Effect Size</i>
HS	High	117	24.25	10.97	.99	.32 (n.s.)	<i>d</i> =0.29
	Low	264	23.01	11.80			
BS	High	117	25.49	11.51	2.68	.01	
	Low	264	22.30	11.83			

## Discussion

This study had two main purposes. First, to assess the psychometric properties of the ASI as well as its appropriateness for being used in the Mexican population. Second, to study potential differences in the sexism levels in groups defined by sex and socio-economical status.

With regards to the first aim, the results suggest that the ASI is a suitable instrument in order to measure the ambivalent sexism in the Mexican context. First, it shows a very clear structure in two factors which is in accordance with the predictions by Glick and Fiske (1996, 2000, 2001). Second, the scores on their derived subscales show appropriate levels of reliability. More specifically, reliability estimates around 0.85 suggest that the scores can be appropriate for research

purposes and for assessment at the group level. And the total scores could even be used for individual or clinical assessment.

The clear structure of the instrument as well as its precision allows profiles of sexism to be defined, and next, consider variables which may influence the profile levels. In this study we have chosen sex and socio-economical status as potential variables of this type, but others such as religion beliefs might be considered.

With regards to sex, the present results suggest that men tend to be more sexist (Benevolent type) than women. However, no differences appeared regarding Hostile Sexism. These results are different from the ones obtained in Chile (Cárdenas *et al.*, 2010) where the sexism levels in both dimensions were found to be the same in men and women. Our results, however, are consistent with women's traditional image as the weak sex and would be coherent with the traditional values of the Mexican society: Mexico is the second country in the world with more catholic people where women are considered as "submissive". If this is so, we believe it is really positive that the global community (OMS, 2013) starts to recognize how important efficient programs that change these values since early age by improving men and women quality of life are for reducing gender inequalities and ultimately prevent against violence.

With regards to the statements just discussed and their relation to the higher levels of BS in men, in our Mexican society, there has been in the last few years an increased female participation in traditional masculine spaces. However, it seems that this fact did not have had a clear influence on the prejudice levels. Instead, it has probably straightened subtle and benevolent prejudice expressions. What is more, it still remains to be assessed whether this increased participation took place because of the demand of women's entry to a "masculine" world or whether it is a result of the new political laws in which women are considered to be more "vulnerable" than men.

With regards to socio-economical level status, those individuals who belong to a high socio-economical level seem to be more sexist (Benevolent component) than the ones from lowest socio-economic levels. Although these results are similar to the ones obtained in Cárdenas *et al.*, (2010), they were not expected, because, according to modern equality theories, educated people are less sexist. The differences in BS obtained here might reflect a greater degree of women's idealization at the higher levels, or plainly undercoverd sexism in the case of high-status individuals (of both sexes) with the aim of developing pro-social behaviors or seek intimacy in the new scenarios characterized by the increasing female participation in traditionally masculine tasks.

We turn now to the limitations of the study as well as future improvements. First, we used a sample of university students, and the high educational level of these participants may have result in biased results. On the one hand, educational level seems to be relevant to explain prejudice levels. On the other, this variable

may also be related to higher socially desirable responses. If so, this response bias might even be partly responsible for explaining the lack of differences in hostile sexism. In future studies social desirability is a variable that must be taken into account, and, if possible, be controlled. More generally, even though we acknowledge the potential limitations caused by the chosen sample, we note that, so far most of the related studies have been done with the same type of sample. So, the present results can be related to those obtained with most previous studies.

The binary measure we used to assess socio-economical status is indeed very crude. Our experience suggests that medium-low and medium high are the most common labels Mexican students use when rating themselves. However, a more fine-graded distinction or even a more objective measure could have lead to improved results. Also it would have allowed potential gender  $\times$  status interactions to be assessed.

Even though we acknowledge the limitations of the study, we conclude that the ASI is a solid tool that can be used to effectively measure ambivalent sexism within the Mexican context. Now, as discussed at the beginning of the article, the results obtained here are only a first step. In future studies we want to assess the predictive power of the ASI scores against some objective criterion of gender violence. If this power was good, the ASI would be very useful when designing or improving programs for the prevention of gender violence. In this respect, it should be stressed that the design and improvement of this type of programs in México is the ultimate aim of the body of research of which this study belongs.

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