

Beliefs and attitudes about intimate partner violence against women in Spain

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Abstract

Background: Some attitudes serve to justify violence against women, to blame women for the violence they experience, and to perpetuate levels of this violence. These attitudes often stem from traditional norms and beliefs which are important to identify. The purpose of this study is to compare beliefs about intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW) between two time points, examining the effect of the respondents—sex and previous academic-training. **Method:** Two opportunity samples of undergraduates took part in this study: 1,392 in 2006 (34.4% men and 65.6% women) and 730 in 2018 (36.3% men and 63.7% women). A four-factor model from the Inventory of Distorted Thoughts on Women and Violence (IPDMV) was used after assessing fit through CFA. **Results:** Significant differences between 2006 and 2018 in all factors were found using MANCOVA (covariable: age). Differences were also found by sex and previous academic-training, and effects of interaction in the first factor between these variables and the time point. **Conclusions:** The beliefs and distorted thoughts about women and violence fell between the two time points analysed, with less acceptance of these beliefs among women and people with prior IPVAW academic-training.

Keywords: Intimate partner violence against women, attitudes, beliefs, assessment.

Resumen

Creencias y actitudes sobre la violencia contra las mujeres en la pareja en España. Antecedentes: algunas actitudes sirven para justificar la violencia contra las mujeres, culparlas por la violencia que experimentan, y perpetuar los niveles de esta violencia. Estas actitudes a menudo se derivan de normas y creencias tradicionales que es importante identificar. El objetivo de este estudio es comparar las creencias sobre violencia contra las mujeres en la pareja (IPVAW) entre dos momentos temporales, analizando el efecto del sexo y la formación académica previa. **Método:** se utilizan dos muestras de conveniencia: 1.392 estudiantes universitarios en 2006 (34,4% hombres y 65,6% mujeres) y 730 en 2018 (36,3% hombres y 63,7% mujeres). Se emplea un modelo de cuatro factores del Inventario de Pensamientos Distorsionados sobre la Mujer y la Violencia (IPDMV), tras evaluar el ajuste mediante AFC. **Resultados:** se obtienen, mediante MANCOVA (covariable: edad), diferencias significativas entre 2006 y 2018 en todos los factores. Se observan asimismo diferencias por sexo y formación académica previa, y efectos de interacción en el primer factor entre estas variables y el momento temporal. **Conclusiones:** las creencias y pensamientos distorsionados sobre la mujer y la violencia disminuyen entre los dos momentos analizados, y son menores en las mujeres y las personas con formación académica previa en IPVAW.

Palabras clave: violencia contra las mujeres en la pareja, actitudes, creencias, evaluación.

Intimate Partner Violence against Women (IPVAW) is the most frequent form of violence suffered by women today and is considered a social and public health problem of epidemic proportions (DeVries et al., 2013; FRA, 2015; Stockl et al., 2013). This violence is a complex phenomenon best understood by the widely used ecological models (e.g., Heise, 1998), which propose that IPVAW is the result of the complex interaction among individual, relationship, social, cultural and environmental factors (WHO, 2012). Despite this, most research about IPVAW has traditionally focused on individual factors, such as low levels of income or education, childhood experience of physical or sexual abuse, or the harmful use of alcohol (WHO, 2012; World Health Organization/London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine,

2010). However, researchers increasingly recognize the importance of community and societal risk factors, such as the unequal social, legal and economic status of women, the use of violence to resolve conflict, weak community sanctions against violence, or traditional gender norms and beliefs (Puente, Ubillós, Echeburúa, & Paez, 2016; WHO, 2012).

With regard to the norms, attitudes, and beliefs that support violence against women, previous research has shown three important implications related to IPVAW (Flood & Pease, 2009; Gracia, & Lila, 2015; Gracia & Tomás, 2014; Gracia, Rodríguez, & Lila, 2015; Heise & Kotsadam, 2015; Wang, 2016). Firstly, as previously mentioned, beliefs and attitudes have a causal relationship to the perpetration of violence against women: there is a consistent relationship between men's adherence to sexist, patriarchal and sexually hostile attitudes and their use of this violence (Capaldi, Knoble, Shortt, & Kim, 2012; Jewkes, Flood, & Lang, 2015; Puente et al., 2016). Secondly, women's responses to IPVAW (self-blame, reporting or not to the police, suffering negative psychological and emotional effects) are shaped by either their own beliefs and attitudes or those of others about this

Received: July 24, 2018 • Accepted: November 27, 2018

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violence (Puente et al., 2016). Finally, beliefs, attitudes and social norms play a role in the responses to IPVAV adopted by family members, friends or professionals (Gracia, García, & Lila, 2014). In summary, prevailing attitudes in many societies serve to justify, tolerate or condone violence against women, often blaming women for the violence they experience, and contributing to perpetuate the levels of violence in these societies (Flood & Pease, 2009; Gracia et al., 2015). These attitudes often stem from traditional norms and beliefs that either view women as subordinate to men, or entitle men to use violence to control women (Heise & Kotsadam, 2015).

Given the importance of these beliefs and attitudes, it is indispensable to identify irrational beliefs and distorted thoughts not only among batterers, but among the general population as well. To this end, the availability of reliable and valid measures is essential for research and also for intervention purposes (Delgado, Estrada, & López, 2015; Villegas, González, Sánchez-García, Sánchez, & Galindo-Villardón, 2018). In the Spanish context, the most widely used tool to measure this issue in recent decades has been the Inventory of Distorted Thoughts about Women and Violence (IPDMV, in the Spanish acronym), an instrument designed by Echeburúa and Fernández-Montalvo (1997, 1998) for clinical purposes, as a part of a cognitive-behavioural programme for treating batterers. The IPDMV was originally a checklist of 29 binary items about irrational thoughts in the aggressor, 13 related to sexual roles and the inferiority of women (IPDM), and 16 related to the use of violence as an acceptable method of conflict resolution (IPDV). Each affirmative response scores 1 point, so that the score on IPDM ranges between 0 and 13 points, and the score on IPDV ranges between 0 and 16 points. The higher the score, the greater the number of distorted thoughts. Their authors do not provide additional information on the psychometric properties of this inventory.

The factorial structure of this scale was analysed by some authors with samples of different characteristics, obtaining different models, as may be seen in Table 1. In this context, a

preliminary purpose of this study was to analyse which factorial model structure is better for IPDMV.

Since its publication, the IPDMV in its original version has been used in numerous researches involving both general population and batterers (Echeburúa & Fernández-Montalvo, 1997, 1998), and using some of the factorial models previously described (especially the model by Ferrer et al., 2006). A list of these papers is included in Table 2.

In addition, since the initial publication of the IPDMV there have been numerous legislative and social changes in relation to IPVAV, both internationally and in Spain (Ferrer & Bosch, 2014; World Health Organization/London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, 2010); and some studies carried out with this questionnaire have found differences in beliefs and attitudes about IPVAV among men and women (Ferrer et al., 2006; Ubillos et al., 2017) and among people who either had or had not received specific academic-training on IPVAV (Ferrer et al., 2006). In this context, the main purpose of this study was to compare results of two temporal moments and analyse the changes in beliefs about IPVAV in the last decade (2006-2018), and to compare results taking into account each respondent's sex and previous academic-training about IPVAV.

Method

Participants

Two opportunity samples of undergraduates participated in this research, 1,392 in 2006 (34.4% men, 65.6% women) and 730 in 2018 (36.3% men, 63.7% women). No differences were found in sex between the two samples ($\chi^2(1) = 0.788; p = .375$). The 2006 sample ($M = 23.00; SD = 4.57$) was significantly older than the 2018 sample ($M = 21.07; SD = 4.04$) ($t(2111) = 9.561; p < .001$). Related to the previous academic-training, 842 participants had studied

Table 1
Factorial models obtained with the IPDMV

Authors	Sample	IPDMV version 29 items used	Results
Ferrer et al. (2006)	1,395 undergraduates	4-point response scale	Validation for general population 24-items Four factors: F1: Acceptability of traditional stereotypes, and misogyny (7-items, $\alpha = .881$) F2: Blaming of victims (8-items, $\alpha = .664$) F3: Use of violence as a strategy to solving problems (5-items, $\alpha = .703$) F4: Minimisation of IPVAV as a problem (4-items, $\alpha = .521$)
Loinaz (2014a)	180 batterer men in prison	Two response options: True/false vs. 4-point scale	Validation for batterer population 24-items. The best option is the 4-point response scale Four factors: F1: Macho stereotypes (7-items, $\alpha = .658$) F2: Women's culpabilization (7-items, $\alpha = .692$) F3: Acceptance of violence (4-items, $\alpha = .631$) F4: Exoneration of the aggressor (6-items, $\alpha = .496$)
Echeburúa et al. (2016)	241 batterer men 222 men from normative population	True/false response scale	Validation for men (batterer and non-batterer) population 21-items One factor ($\alpha = .740$)
Ubillos et al. (2017)	2,919 Basque-speakers secondary school students	Basque version 4-point response scale	Validation of a Basque version 21-items From a modified 4-factor model (based on Ferrer et al., 2006), they finally propose two factors: F1: Beliefs about women (6-items, $\alpha = .880$) F2: Beliefs about the use of violence and abuse against women (15-items, $\alpha = .780$)

Table 2
Research carried out in Spain applying the IPDMV

Authors	Sample	IPDMV version	Aim	
Ruiz & Expósito (2008a)	13 men imprisoned for IPVAW	Original ^a	Psychological intervention programs with batterers	
Ruiz & Expósito (2008b)	13 men imprisoned for IPVAW			
Echeburúa, Fernández-Montalvo, & Amor (2006)	52 men imprisoned for IPVAW			
Echeburúa & Fernández-Montalvo (2009)	148 men imprisoned for IPVAW			
Echeburúa, Sarasua, Zubizarreta, & de Corral (2009)	196 male batterers from a community setting			
Martínez & Pérez (2009)	62 men imprisoned for IPVAW			
Boira, López, Tomás, & Gaspar (2013)	46 men convicted of IPVAW 15 men from a control group		Profile/typology of batterers	
Rodríguez-Espartal & López-Zafra (2013)	36 men imprisoned for IPVAW			
Fernández-Montalvo & Echeburúa (2005)	162 men imprisoned for IPVAW	Original ^a		
Boira & Tomás (2011)	62 paroled men convicted of IPVAW			
Fernández-Montalvo, Echaury, Martínez, & Azcárate (2011)	448 men who have sought help after committing IPVAW			
Fernández-Montalvo, Echaury, Martínez, & Azcárate (2012)	399 men in a treatment program for IPVAW			
Arrigoni, Jiménez, Navarro, & Mendoza (2013)	38 paroled men convicted of IPVAW			
Boira & Jodrá (2013)	661 men convicted of IPVAW in a community treatment program	Original ^a		
Loinaz, Echeburúa, & Torrubia (2010)	50 men convicted of IPVAW	Original ^a Adaptation ^b		
Loinaz, Ortiz, Sánchez, & Ferragut (2011)	50 men imprisoned for IPVAW	Adaptation ^b		
Loinaz (2014b)	100 men imprisoned for IPVAW		Distorted thoughts in the emergence and maintenance of IPVAW	
Llor, García, Ruiz, & Godoy (2016)	90 men convicted of IPVAW (50 serving a prison sentence, and 40 from a mandatory community intervention program)			
Torres & López-Zafra (2010)	135 men (45 imprisoned for IPVAW, 45 imprisoned for other crimes, 45 non-inmate men)	Adaptation ^b		
García, Sánchez-Meca, & Godoy (2013)	159 men convicted of IPVAW			
Guerrero, Moreno, Guerrero, & Cruz (2016)	129 men convicted of IPVAW	Original ^a		
Ferrer, Bosch, & Ramis (2008)	175 undergraduates of Psychology and Nursing	Adaptation ^b		Perception of future health professionals
Ruiz, García, Llor, & Godoy (2015)	89 common delinquents 50 batterers	Adaptation ^b		
Arnosó, Ibabe, Arnosó, & Elgorriaga (2017)	251 adults living in Spain (28% native, 72% immigrants)	Adaptation ^b		Sexism, IPV, and cultural context

^a Original version: 29-items. True/false response scale. Two scales: IPDM and IPDV
^b Adaptation from Ferrer et al. (2006): 24-items/4-point response scale. Four factors

some topic related to IPVAW (27.9% in 2006, 62.3% in 2018) and the difference between the two samples was statistically significant ($\chi^2(1) = 235.53; p < .001$). The predominant socioeconomic status was 64.2% middle class in both samples.

Instruments

The participants completed the 29 items of the original IPDMV (Echeburúa & Fernández-Montalvo, 1997, 1998), using the four-point response scale proposed by Ferrer et al. (2006), where higher scores indicate a greater justification of abuse.

Procedure

The students who agreed to participate in the investigation completed the consent form and the questionnaire in paper and

pencil format. The evaluation was carried out in compliance with current ethical standards, and the research was approved by the Bioethics Committee of the University.

Data analysis

Mahalanobis' distance to check for multivariate outliers (MVOs) was used. The threshold value of .001 suggested by Tabachnick and Fidell (2007) was the probability estimate for outlier identification. No outliers were dropped out since the lowest probability was $p = .004$.

Various Confirmatory Factor Analyses (CFA) were carried out to test the fit of each of the different proposed models for IPDMV (see Table 1) and to select the best factorial model to compare 2006 and 2018 samples, after eliminating incomplete questionnaires ($n = 1,211$, and $n = 624$, respectively). The Unweighted Least Squares

(ULS) estimation method (McDonald, 1982) was used, since it does not require the observed variables to follow a determined distribution, which is recommended for categorical and ordinal variables, thus providing more accurate parameter estimates (Forero, Maydeu, & Gallardo, 2009; Morata, Holgado, Barbero, & Méndez, 2015). The fit of the model to data was analysed using multiple criteria: GFI > .90; AGFI > .85; NFI > .90; SRMR < .05 or between .05 and .08 described as acceptable (Anderson & Gerbig, 1984; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Schermelleh-Engel, Moosbrugger, & Müller, 2003). Two Parsimonious Fit Indices were used: PGFI and PNFI, generally accepted with .50, when other Goodness-of-Fit indices are all .90 (Muliak et al., 1989).

A Multivariate Analysis of Covariance (MANCOVA) was performed to examine the effect of the year of application, sex, and previous academic-training on the IPDMV scores. The age was added as covariate to control the influence that this variable may have on the IPDMV scores, since the Student t test showed statistically significant differences between sample ages in 2006 and 2018. The effect size was estimated using partial-eta-squared (Trigo & Martínez, 2016). The data were analysed with IBM SPSS and AMOS 23.

Results

Model selection for comparisons between samples

As shown in Table 3, the most satisfactory fit was obtained for the 4-factor model by Ubillos et al. (2017). However, according to the factors composition, Factor 4 of this model has two limitations: it is composed of only 3 items, when 5 or more items are desirable (Costelo & Osborne, 2005), and their internal consistency is very weak ($\alpha = .25$). For this reason, we propose a new model, based on that obtained by Ferrer et al. (2006), where Factor 1 and Factor 4 contain the same items that are found in this model, and similarly to Loinaz (2014a), where item 16 is removed from Factor 2, and item 29 is added to Factor 4 (see Figure 1). As shown in Table 3, the fit of this new model is also very satisfactory, and the internal consistency for its factors (Factor 1: $\alpha = .86$, $\omega = .87$; Factor 2: $\alpha = .62$, $\omega = .66$; Factor 3: $\alpha = .69$, $\omega = .72$; Factor 4: $\alpha = .53$, $\omega = .57$) improves those of the weakest factors in the other four-factor solutions (Ferrer et al., 2006; Loinaz, 2014a; Ubillos et al., 2017). It can be noted that this fit is satisfactory both in 2006 sample and in 2018 sample (Factor 1: $\alpha_{2006} = .88$ and $\alpha_{2018} = .79$; Factor 2: $\alpha_{2006} = .64$ and $\alpha_{2018} = .57$; Factor 3: $\alpha_{2006} = .70$ and $\alpha_{2018} = .65$; Factor 4: $\alpha_{2006} = .55$ and $\alpha_{2018} = .49$). The item's discrimination index ranges between .208 and .534.

Prior to addressing the main objective of the present study, measurement and structural invariance (Byrne, 2008, 2009) of

the new model was analysed across the 2006 and 2018 samples. Following Byrne's approach, invariance testing was conducted in four increasingly restrictive steps. These results are displayed in Table 4.

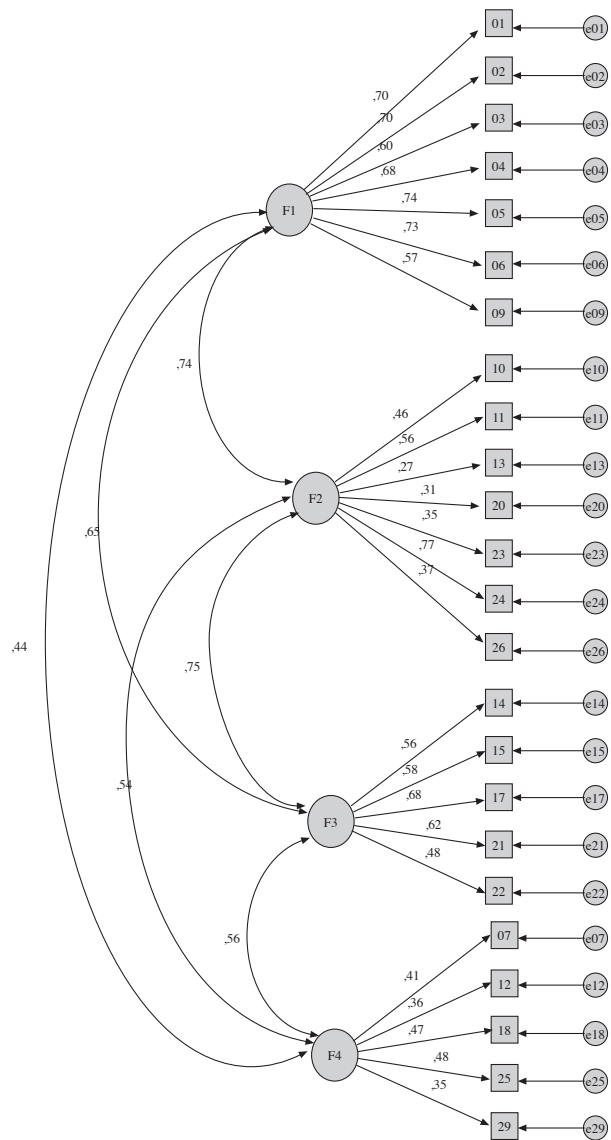


Figure 1. New Model of 4 factors
 F1: Inferiority of women compared to men; F2: Blaming female victims of abuse; F3: Violence as an appropriate problem-solving strategy; F4: Minimization of IPVAV as a problem and exoneration of the abuser

Table 3
 Fit Indices of the factorial models IPDMV

Fit Indices	Ferrer et al. (2006) 4 Factors	Ubillos et al. (2017) 4 Factors	Loinaz (2014a) 4 Factors	Ubillos et al. (2017) 2 Factors	Echeburúa et al. (2016) 1 Factor	New Model 4 Factors
GFI	.975	.983	.972	.981	.962	.982
AGFI	.970	.979	.966	.976	.954	.978
SRMR	.063	.044	.068	.046	.094	.046
NFI	.916	.948	.923	.940	.872	.949
PGFI	.800	.779	.797	.798	.787	.805
PNFI	.816	.826	.823	.842	.785	.846

Table 4
Measurement and structural invariance of the IPDMV across samples by year

Model	GFI	NFI	SRMR
1. Baseline-Configural model	.977	.937	.047
2. Equal factor loadings	.970	.917	.054
3. Equal factor variances and covariances	.967	.910	.062
4. Equal error variances	.960	.889	.055
4b. Equal error variances (partial invariance) ^a	.964	.900	.055

^a Error variances for Items 13 (Factor 2), 21 (Factor 3) and 12 (Factor 4) not constrained

Once the acceptable fit of the hypothesized model across samples (*Baseline-Configural model*) was confirmed, the subsequently nested invariance models (which increasingly constrained factors loadings, factor variances and covariances, and error variances to be equal across groups), yielded acceptable fit indices. The only exception was the NFI at the error measurement level (.889). However, partial invariance was obtained by releasing error variance constraints for three items, so the equality of item reliability across samples could be at least partially assumed.

Differences by application year, sex and previous academic-training in IPVAV

MANCOVA introducing the covariate age was carried out. Pillai's trace test was statistically significant ($F(4, 2070) = 4.017$; $p = .003$; $\eta^2 = .008$). The principal effects of the independent variables were also statistically significant: year of application ($F(4, 2070) = 8.770$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .017$), sex ($F(4, 2070) = 66.218$;

$p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .113$), and previous academic-training in IPVAV ($F(4, 2070) = 5.602$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .011$). The intersubject effect on each of the factors is shown in Table 5.

The scores go down from 2006 to 2018 for all the factors, and the effect size is larger for Factor 3 (see Figure 2). Regarding sex and academic-training, the scores for women are lower than those for men in all the factors, and having or not previous IPVAV academic-training results in statistically significant differences in Factor 1, Factor 3, and Factor 4.

Finally, it is important to highlight the statistically significant interaction effects observed in Factor 1 between year of application and sex ($F(1, 2073) = 4.019$; $p = .045$; $\eta^2 = .002$), and between year of application and previous academic-training in IPVAV ($F(1, 2073) = 5.606$; $p = .018$; $\eta^2 = .003$). As may be seen in Figure 3, the difference between the scores of men and women is larger in 2006 ($F(1, 2073) = 94.673$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .073$) than in 2018 ($F(1, 2073) = 42.008$; $p < .001$; $\eta^2 = .052$), and the previous academic-training in IPVAV produces differences in 2006 ($F(1, 2073) = 10.451$; $p = .001$; $\eta^2 = .011$), but not in 2018 ($F(1, 2073) = 0.040$; $p = .841$; $\eta^2 = .004$).

Discussion

The first step of this study was to test different factorial model structures for the IPDMV, in order to select the best model for further comparisons. To this end, we carried out different analyses, applying previous models (Echeburúa et al., 2016; Ferrer et al., 2006; Loinaz, 2014a; Ubillos et al., 2017.) These analyses lead us to propose a new factorial structure based on the Ferrer et al. (2006) model and very similar to it in its structure and theoretical significance. These results are especially relevant if we take into account the fact that the Ferrer et al. (2006) factorial model has been used with batterers from 2010 until the present day, and it

Table 5
Effects of year of application, sex, and previous academic-training

Factor	Year of application		Sex		Previous academic-training		
	2006	2018	Men	Women	No	Yes	
1	<i>M</i>	1.14	1.08	1.25	1.05	1.15	1.08
	(<i>SD</i>)	(0.32)	(0.24)	(0.44)	(0.14)	(0.34)	(0.22)
	<i>F</i> (1, 2073)	14.038		129.944		4.327	
	<i>p</i>	< .001		< .001		.038	
	η^2	.007		.059		.002	
2	<i>M</i>	1.58	1.52	1.73	1.46	1.59	1.50
	(<i>SD</i>)	(0.39)	(0.40)	(0.48)	(0.30)	(0.41)	(0.38)
	<i>F</i> (1, 2073)	13.202		165.949		1.065	
	<i>p</i>	< .001		< .001		.302	
	η^2	.006		.074		.001	
3	<i>M</i>	1.69	1.54	1.86	1.51	1.71	1.52
	(<i>SD</i>)	(0.51)	(0.51)	(0.59)	(0.42)	(0.52)	(0.48)
	<i>F</i> (1, 2073)	29.7852		188.416		8.2485	
	<i>p</i>	< .001		< .001		.004	
	η^2	.014		.083		.004	
4	<i>M</i>	2.20	2.07	2.26	2.09	2.23	2.04
	(<i>SD</i>)	(0.57)	(0.60)	(0.60)	(0.57)	(0.59)	(0.57)
	<i>F</i> (1, 2073)	9.047		29.944		17.167	
	<i>p</i>	.003		< .001		< .001	
	η^2	.004		.014		.008	

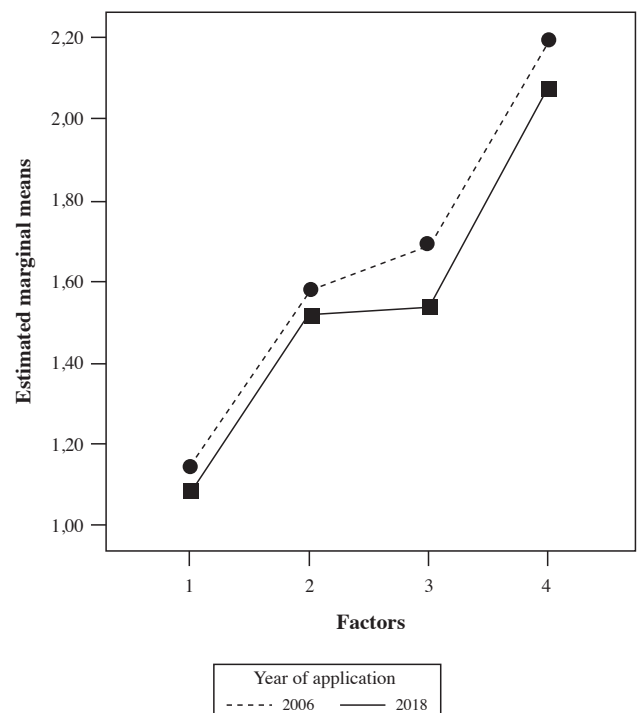


Figure 2. Factor scores 2006 and 2018

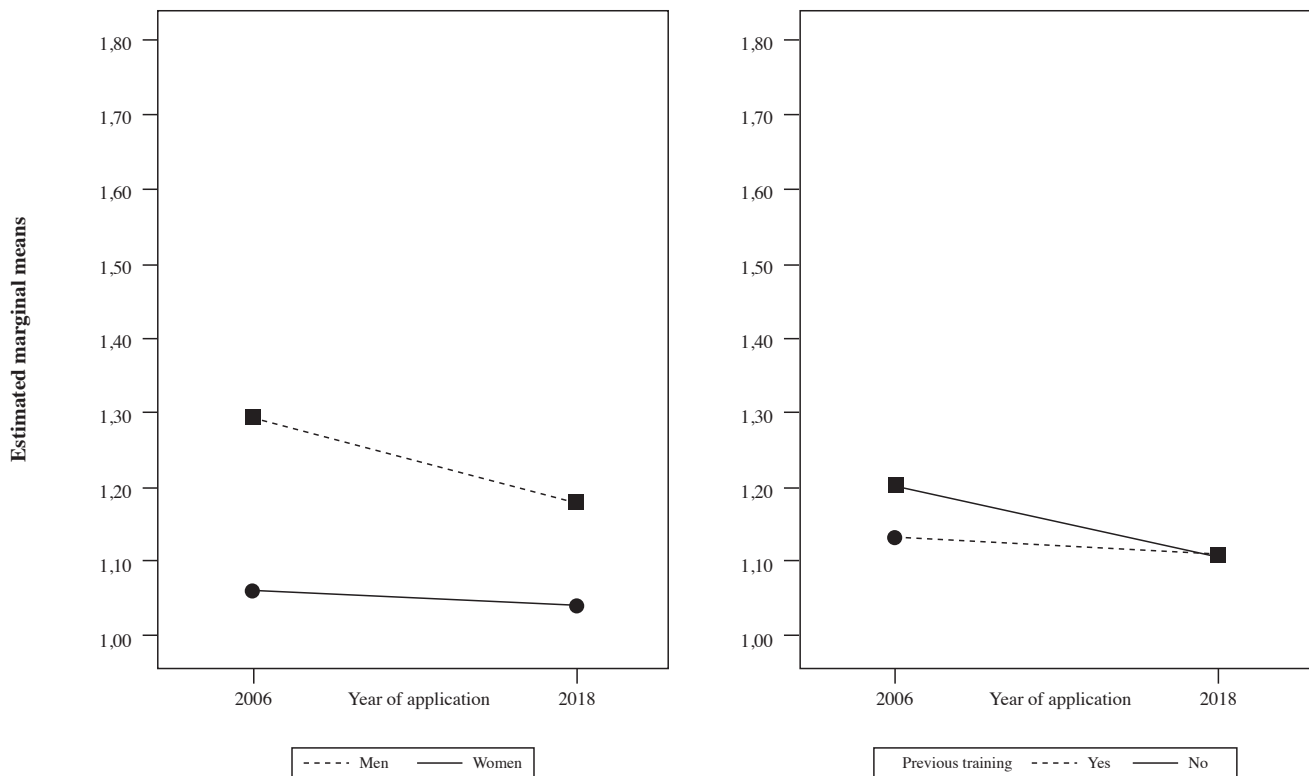


Figure 3. Statistically significant interaction effects in Factor 1 (Covariate: Age = 22.31)

has also been used in different studies with the general population. Consequently, it is encouraging that this adaptation of one of the most commonly used models (see Table 2) continues to be the best option for using this questionnaire.

But the IPDMV and the factorial structure obtained are not without limitations. In this regard, we can mention its well-known sensitiveness to social desirability, as with other explicit measures of beliefs and attitudes (e.g., Ferrer et al., 2006; Ubillos et al., 2017), and its low sensitivity to therapeutic change and capacity to discriminate between samples (Loinaz, 2014a). In fact, the internal consistency of some of the IPDMV factors is too low to be clinically useful, and is instead a better tool for basic research aims.

Beyond the concerns related to the structure and internal inconsistency of this instrument, the main objective of our paper was to compare the results obtained by applying IPDMV to two temporal moments, and account for each respondent's sex and previous academic-training. The results obtained show statistically significant differences. Thus, as demonstrated in previous studies (Ferrer et al., 2006; Flood & Pease, 2009; Gracia et al., 2015; Ubillos et al., 2017), women and people with prior IPVAV academic-training show fewer beliefs and distorted thoughts about women and violence. Moreover, it is interesting to note that the scores obtained in all the factors evaluated fell between the two temporal moments analysed (2006 and 2018). Therefore, it can be assumed that the awareness-raising measures adopted in Spain

(e.g., legislative changes, prevention campaigns, or academic-training programs) had an effect on previously held beliefs. As the results of the interaction show (see Figure 3), this decline has occurred especially among men in terms of their beliefs regarding the inferiority of women.

Although these results may be encouraging and point to the positive effect of the awareness-raising and prevention measures being implemented, it is important to remember that this study is not without limitations. Among them would be the fact that the sample is made up solely of university students, or that the measure used may be influenced by social desirability (Delgado et al., 2015; Ferrer et al., 2006; García-Vega, Rico, & Fernández, 2017; Loinaz, 2014a; Ubillos et al., 2017). Therefore, further research is needed to generalize our results to an increasingly large and heterogeneous population in order to understand the scope and evolution of these beliefs and thoughts about IPVAV, in parallel to recent developments in measurement invariance when the number of groups is large (e.g., Byrne & van de Vijver, 2017).

Acknowledgements

This work has been financed by the Spanish State Research Agency (Agencia Española de Investigación, AEI) and the European Regional Development Fund (Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo Regional, FEDER) through the Research Project FEM2015-63912-P (AEI/FEDER, UE).

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