



Received: 05 August 2017
Accepted: 20 August 2018
First Published: 28 August 2018

*Corresponding author: Luca Rollè,
Department of Psychology, University
of Turin, 14 Via Po, Torino, TO 10123,
Italy
E-mail: l.rolle@unito.it

Reviewing editor:
Justin Hackett, Psychology,
California University of Pennsylvania,
USA

Additional information is available at
the end of the article

SOCIAL PSYCHOLOGY | RESEARCH ARTICLE

Intimate partner violence: Attitudes in a sample of Italian students

Luca Rollè^{1*}, Cristina Sechi², Luciana Patteri¹, Giulia Costa¹, Maurizio Bergaglia¹, Lella Menzio³, Gabriele Traverso³ and Piera Brustia¹

Abstract: Domestic violence (DV) and intimate partner violence (IPV) represent a widespread phenomenon. Several studies that focus on students and their attitudes toward DV and IPV indicate that changes in attitudes may depend on gender. The purpose of this study was to explore the perception of violence against women among 4,200 undergraduate Italian students and how these perceptions are associated with gender. Students were recruited as volunteers to fill out a questionnaire specifically developed to evaluate their attitudes regarding IPV. Relations were explored by cross-tabulation analysis with the Chi-square test and *post hoc* evaluation of adjusted standardized residuals. The students appeared to be sensitive to relevant topics regarding violence, but they demonstrated a lack of confidence in legal institutions. Looking at gender differences, the male students tended to justify a perpetrator's actions more than the females. This could be explained as a more distant view of the phenomenon for male students compared to females, probably due to cultural differences.

Subjects: Psychological Science; Social Psychology; Educational Psychology

Keywords: intimate partner violence; domestic violence; attitudes; students

Domestic violence (DV) and intimate partner violence (IPV) have become important social issues all over the world (Lloyd et al., 2017; Gerino, Caldarera, Curti, Brustia, & Rollè, 2018; Rollè, Giardina, Caldarera, Gerino, & Brustia 2018). To better understand this phenomenon, it is important to identify the differences between DV from IPV, which are terms often used interchangeably. DV refers to any form of violence perpetrated within a family relationship. It can concern partner abuses, but DV also concerns violence against children or elder members of the same family by another family member (Ramsay et al., 2012; Tavoli, Tavoli, Amirpour, Hosseini, & Montazeri, 2016).

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

The interest of our group in DV and in the IPV starts years ago in collaboration with local and national NGO and with the submission of project to the EU and to the national agency. Our group analyzes the DV and IPV without any preclusion related to sex or gender identity (i.e. DV or IPV in same-sex couples). We also work in primary prevention action with local association like Telefono Rosa Piemonte to inform students how to fight DV and IPV. We had the opportunity to work in two European projects with an international network on this topic.

PUBLIC INTEREST STATEMENT

Domestic violence and intimate partner violence are very widespread phenomena. All around the world, every 8 min, a woman is killed and WHO report states that 61% of 15–49 years old women have been physically abused at least once in the lifetime; a large number of violence cases remain unreported by victims. Educate young people is a fundamental element in the prevention and the fight against domestic violence: it can be usefully focused on students and their attitudes toward DV and IPV. Indeed, today's students will be the future elite class of our society, and that's the reason why it is important since young age to raise awareness on these issues.

IPV specifically refers to any form of violence that occurs in an intimate relationship, such as physical violence, sexual violence, emotional and psychological abuse, and controlling behavior that causes physical, psychological, or sexual harm to those in the relationship (Black et al., 2011; FRA, 2014; Jackson, 2007; World Health Organization, 2016).

According to the data from an Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) survey (2014), 31.5% of Italian women between the ages of 16 and 70 have been victims of physical or sexual violence during their lifetime; 62% of these acts of violence have been perpetrated by the partner or the ex-partner of the victims (ISTAT, 2014). The WHO report states that 61% of women between the ages of 15 and 49 have been physically abused at least once in the lifetime, and many violence cases remain unreported by victims (World Health Organization, 2016).

Since the 1990s, as WHO affirmed, “violence against women has emerged as a fundamental right concern that warrants legal and political recognition at the highest level, and as an area where State Parties, as those with a duty to protect, have an obligation to safeguard victims” (WHO, 2013, p.7). The Council of Europe, through the Istanbul Convention, drew up a formal document with the aim to create a multinational shared legislation (not just by EU members) to protect victims of violence and help member states in their fight against DV and violence against women (COE, 2011).

Telefono Rosa Torino (www.telefonorosatorino.it) is an Italian association that deals with the prevention and intervention of gender-based violence towards women (including physical, psychological, economic, and sexual violence and stalking events). The most recent data available from Telefono Rosa Torino show that 688 women were helped in 2015 and 723 in 2016. According to the data, the number of victims is slightly growing, due to an increase in the severity of the violent episodes. Episodes of physical violence increased from 62% to 77%, the psychological and verbal violence episodes grew from 81% to 87%, and stalking events rose from 15% to 36%. Despite these increases, episodes of sexual violence have decreased from 25% to 18%. Furthermore, online aid requests increased from 2,467 in 2015 to 3,018 in 2016 (TELEFONO ROSA, 2017). In the 2016 report, the association pointed out that 85% of violent acts were perpetrated by an intimate partner.

There have been an increasing number of articles, papers, and other contributions on this topic in international literature in recent decades. In the last few years, most of the literature has focused on prevention, intervention, and legal issues (Crabtree-Nelson, Grossman, & Lundy, 2016; De Koker, Mathews, Zuch, Bastien, & Mason-Jones, 2014; Eckhardt et al., 2013; Goodman, Banyard, Woulfe, Ash, & Mattern, 2016a; Goodman, Fauci, Sullivan, DiGiovanni, & Wilson, 2016b; Hester & Westmarland, 2005; Jahanfar, Janssen, Howard, & Dowswell, 2013; Lloyd et al., 2017; MacDowell & Cammett, 2016; McQueeney, 2016; Meyersfeld, 2016; Rodgers, 2016; Sargent, McDonald, Vu, & Jouriles, 2016; Triantafyllou, Wang, & North, 2016).

Several studies focused on students and their attitudes toward DV and IPV (Bryant & Spencer, 2003; Jiao, Sun, Farmer, & Lin, 2016; Lin, Sun, Wu, & Liu, 2016; Nayak, Byrne, Martin, & Abraham, 2003; Policastro & Payne, 2013; Sylaska & Walters, 2014; Wu, Button, Smolter, & Poteyeva, 2013). The main results of the research shows that changes in attitude may depend on gender (Bryant & Spencer, 2003; Sylaska & Walters, 2014) and on the country of origin (Lin et al., 2016; Jiao et al., 2016; Nayak et al., 2003). Furthermore, some of the research evidenced that male students tend to blame IPV victims rather than their perpetrators, and that IPV definitions provided by male students were more limited than those of female students (Bryant & Spencer, 2003; Sylaska & Walters, 2014). Lin et al. (2016), Jiao et al. (2016) and Sun et al. (2012) identified the most influential predictors toward beliefs on IPV in the gender role and violence attitudes evident in police response. The research indicated that a favorable attitude toward male dominance seems to be related to a greater tolerance of violent behaviors against an intimate partner. Cultural differences emerged from a comparative study between American and Chinese students (Sun

et al., 2012). In the Chinese sample, results show a more traditional police response, while the Americans seemed more inclined to a proactive police approach. Crucial factors in determining these results were identified mainly in cultural and legal differences, including attitudes toward (and the defining of) IPV, the levels of tolerance for violence, and a male dominance in supporting gender inequality beliefs (Sun et al., 2012). Gender differences emerged from a study by Russell and colleagues (2016): a sample of 263 American students highlighted the tendency to attribute a higher blame in the case of female victims and a greater ability of the male perpetrator to arouse fear of injury.

Focusing on the Italian context, the current literature shows many research projects dealing with DV and IPV (Baldry & Winkel, 2008; Bucci, 2012; Chiara, Mazzali, Lelli, Mariani, & Cimbanassi, 2013; Gribaldo, 2014; Mamo et al., 2015; Mauri, Nespole, Persico, & Zoppi, 2015; Miragoli, Camisasca, & Di Blasio, 2017; Romito & Gerin, 2002; Signorelli, Arcidiacono, Musumeci, Di Nuovo, & Aguglia, 2014), but to our knowledge, Italian literature is lacking regarding studies about university students' attitudes toward IPV.

The aim of our cross-sectional, descriptive study design was to investigate the Italian undergraduate students' perceptions and attitudes about IPV.

1. Method

1.1. Participants

Participants were voluntarily recruited and selected from 24 upper-level undergraduate classes. We discussed the goals of the study with 4,200 students, and 4,120 of them decided to participate. After signing an informed consent approved by the Torino University Ethical Committee, the students completed the Telefono Rosa Torino questionnaires.

Specifically, the sample consisted of 2,364 (57%) females and 1,756 (43%) males, who were attending a variety of courses at the University of Torino (Italy). The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 50 years, with a mean age of 22.7 ($SD = 4.9$).

All participants were living in Italy, and the sample was composed solely of Caucasian participants. There were no incentives given for participation.

1.2. Measures

The Italian association, Telefono Rosa Torino, created a questionnaire to evaluate the opinions on violence against women. The instrument was content validated by four experienced psychologists who dealt with issues related to violence, and then comments and suggestions made by the psychologists were adapted in the final version of the questionnaire. To determine the reliability of the instrument, it was administered to 50 undergraduate students who were not part of the sample in the final study. After 1 month, it was re-administered to the same 50 students. The data obtained from these two administrations were subjected to the Cronbach alpha formulae for internal consistency and reliability. Coefficients of .81 were obtained, and the following questions were included:

Item (1) Does the violence against women that you know strike you more than that against women that you don't know? (1 = no, it strikes me in the same way; 2 = it depends on the seriousness of the violence; 3 = yes, it does);

Item (2) According to your belief, do you think it is more serious that: (1 = a woman was killed by her abuser; 2 = a woman has suffered violence for years by her abuser; 3 = children have seen their mother being abused);

Item (3) Which of these sentences do you agree with more? (1 = There are laws, but they are not applied; 2 = Violence is not a problem that concerns me directly; 3 = Violence against women will hardly decrease; 4 = Violence against women is not so spread; 5 = None of the aforementioned sentences);

Item (4) When, by watching TV or reading newspapers, you know about the background of a femicide (couple in crisis, quarrels for children's assistance, eventual affairs, etc.) do you feel the need to find a justification for the abuser's acts? (1 = yes, I do; 2 = yes, I do, sometimes; 3 = no, I don't, never);

Item (5) Which are the limits of individual freedom in a love relationship? (1 = No individual freedom, everything has to be shared; 2 = I think it's normal to control the partner according to what he or she does; 3 = Each of the partners must have his or her individual freedom; 4 = Individuality must always have its indispensable space in a sentimental relationship);

Item (6) In the sentimental relationship, do you think that partners should limit: (1 = direct contact with "not-shared" friends of the opposite sex? 2 = social networking with friends or acquaintances? 3 = an obsessive dependence on his or her native family? 4 = nothing: individual freedom must be preserved).

1.3. Data analysis

Descriptive statistics were used to describe the distribution of the demographic characteristics of the participants. Various relations were explored by crosstabulation analysis with Chi-square testing and *post hoc* evaluation of adjusted standardized residuals for each cell to determine which cells have the greatest differences when compared with another. If the adjusted standardized residual is greater than two, or less than two, then that cell can be considered a major contributor to the significance of the overall χ^2 statistic.

2. Results

Item 1: Does the violence against women that you know strike you more than that against women that you don't know?

In the student sample, 42.5% stated that the violence against women, both known and unknown, affects them the same way; 32% stated that it depends on the severity of the violence; and 26% stated that violence against known women affects them more than violence against unknown women.

A Chi-square test conducted to assess the gender differences in responses to this research question yielded a significant result: $\chi^2 = 56.18$, $df = 2$, $p = .000$. Four cells were associated with adjusted residuals greater than ± 2 (Table 1).

Item 2: According to your belief, which of the following do you think is more serious?

41.3% of the students thought that it is more serious that a woman has suffered violence for years by her abuser; 33.5% thought that a woman killed by her abuser was more serious; and 25.3% thought that children seeing their mother being abused was more serious.

A Chi-square test, conducted on gender differences, yielded a significant result: $\chi^2 = 8.21$, $df = 2$, $p < .05$. Any cell was associated with adjusted residuals greater than ± 2 (Table 2).

Table 1. Crosstabulation of gender and Item 1

	Gender	
	Males	Females
Yes, it does	353 (-4.6)	706 (4)
It depends on the seriousness of the violence	568 (.4)	743 (-.3)
No, it strikes me in the same way	835 (3.3)	915 (-2.8)

Note Adjusted standardized residuals appear in parentheses below group frequencies.

Table 2. Crosstabulation of gender and Item 2

	Gender	
	Males	Females
<i>A woman has killed by her abuser</i>	561 (-1.1)	818 (1)
<i>A woman has suffered violence for years by her abuser</i>	713 (-.4)	987 (.4)
<i>Children have seen their mother being abused</i>	482 (1.8)	559 (1.6)

Note Adjusted standardized residuals appear in parentheses below group frequencies.

Item 3: Which of these sentences do you agree with more?.

35.4% of the sample thought that there are laws, but they are not applied; 1.5% stated that violence is not a problem that concerns them directly; 13.2% said that violence against women will hardly decrease; 1.2% thought that violence against women is not so spread; and 48.7% disagree with all the other sentences.

A Chi-square test conducted on gender differences yielded a significant result: $\chi^2 = 83.62$, $df = 4$, $p < .001$. Four cells were associated with adjusted residuals greater than ± 2 (Table 3).

Item 4: When, by watching TV or reading newspapers, you know about the background of a feminicide (couple in crisis, quarrels for children's assistance, eventual affairs, etc.) do you feel the need to find a justification for the abuser's acts?

In the overall sample, 85% stated that they never find a justification for the abuser's acts; 14.3% sometimes found a justification; and 7% stated that they often find justification.

A Chi-square test conducted on gender differences yielded a significant result: $\chi^2 = 245.67$, $df = 2$, $p = .000$. All six of the cells were associated with adjusted residuals greater than ± 2 (Table 4).

Item 5: Which are the limits of individual freedom in a love relationship?

In the student sample, 47% thought that individuality must always have its indispensable role in a sentimental relationship; 49% stated that each of the partners must have his or her individual freedom; 2.5% believed that it is normal to control the partner according to what he or she does; and 1.5% said that there is no individual freedom, everything has to be shared.

Table 3. Crosstabulation of gender and Item 3

	Gender	
	Males	Females
<i>There are laws, but they are not applied</i>	585 (-1.5)	875 (1.3)
<i>Violence is not a problem that concerns me directly</i>	47 (4.1)	14 (-3.5)
<i>Violence against women will hardly decrease</i>	242(.7)	300 (-.6)
<i>Violence against women is not as spread</i>	45 (5.3)	4 (-4.5)
<i>None of the aforementioned sentences</i>	837 (-.6)	1,171 (.6)

Note Adjusted standardized residuals appear in parentheses below group frequencies.

Table 4. Crosstabulation of gender and Item 4

	Gender	
	Males	Females
<i>No, I don't, never</i>	1,314 (-4.6)	2,186 (4)
<i>Yes, I do, sometimes</i>	419 (10.6)	171 (-9.1)
<i>Yes, I do, often</i>	23 (2.9)	7 (-2.5)

Note Adjusted standardized residuals appear in parentheses below group frequencies.

A Chi-square test conducted on gender differences yielded a significant result: $\chi^2 = 96.67$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$. Nine cells were associated with adjusted residuals greater than ± 2 (Table 5).

Item 6: What do you think that should be limited by the partner in the sentimental relationship?

78.4% of the sample thought that individual freedom must be preserved; 15% stated that partners should limit obsessive dependence on his or her native family; 3.4% believed that partners should limit social networking with friends or acquaintances; and 3.1% said that partners should limit direct contact with “not-shared” friends of the opposite sex.

A Chi-square test conducted on gender differences yielded a significant result: $\chi^2 = 18.18$, $df = 3$, $p < .001$. Two cells were associated with adjusted residuals greater than ± 2 (Table 6).

Table 5. Crosstabulation of gender and Item 5

	Gender	
	Males	Females
<i>Individuality must always has its indispensable space in a sentimental relationship</i>	705 (-4.2)	1,230 (3.6)
<i>Each of the partners must have his/her individual freedom</i>	942 (2.6)	1,092 (-2.2)
<i>I think it's normal to control the partner according on what he/she does</i>	78 (5.1)	26 (-4.4)
<i>No individual freedom, everything has to be shared</i>	31 (2.5)	16 (-2.1)

Note Adjusted standardized residuals appear in parentheses below group frequencies.

Table 6. Crosstabulation of gender and Item 6

	Gender	
	Males	Females
<i>Nothing: individual freedom must be preserved</i>	1,343 (-.9)	1,888 (.8)
<i>An obsessive dependence from his/her native family</i>	265 (.1)	353 (-.1)
<i>Social networking with friends or acquaintances</i>	74 (1.7)	68 (-1.5)
<i>Direct contact with “not-shared” friends of the opposite sex</i>	74 (2.6)	55 (-2.2)

Note Adjusted standardized residuals appear in parentheses below group frequencies.

3. Discussion

The presented questionnaire represents the first attempt to detect students' attitudes about violence against women within the Piedmont regional context. Most of the reported data are consistent with the results of previous studies about DV and IPV, despite some differences from the studies in recent years present in the international literature, probably due to cultural differences between countries. As it has been the first administration attempt of a large sample, it appears meaningful to analyze the results recorded by each single relevant item of the tool.

Concerning the analysis of *Item 1*, it was noticed that female students were more emotionally stricken, compared to males (20.10%), when violence was perpetrated against familiar women (29.86). On the other hand, more male students (45.55%) indicated they would be emotionally stricken in the same way, whether a violent act was perpetrated against a known or unknown woman, than female students (38.70%). Results suggest that violence against women represents a relevant problem and that students are sensitive to the phenomenon, even when it hurts people who they do not directly know. In addition, results do not show any statistically relevant gender difference associated with the perceived seriousness of the committed violence (Etter & Birzer, 2007).

Regarding *Item 2*, most of the students in the sample seemed to be more sympathetic toward women suffering repeated abuse repeated for several years, without relevant differences between males and females. These data are consistent with the definition of IPV as a form of repeated episodes of violence within an abusive relationship (Walby, Allen, & Simmons, 2004). The majority of the sample asserted that there are laws against violence towards women, although these are not implemented in practice. In Italy, acts of DV and IPV are punishable, as provided by Law Number 15 (Gazzetta Ufficiale, 2013); in Piedmont, Law Number 4 provides prevention and intervention against gender-based violence and promotes supporting acts toward women victims of violence and their children (BUR, 2016). Another interesting outcome could be represented by 13.2% of the students who reported that they are not confident about a possible decrease of violent acts against women. In opposition to this belief, recent data from ISTAT (2014) showed a decrease in both sexual and physical violent acts as well as in the rate of psychological violence. ISTAT data also showed an increase in violence leading to injuries.

The direct individual involvement in violence (*Item 3*) presents a relevant difference between genders: 2.68% of the male sample ($N = 47$) agreed with the statement "Violence is not a problem that concerns me directly," compared to the 0.59% of females ($N = 14$). This can be addressed to public attitudes, in that it implies an emotional detachment—for example, a lack of sympathy for the victim—to create a psychological distance from them (Gracia, 2014). In addition, 45 male students and 4 female students in the sample reported that, in their opinion, violence against women does not represent a spread phenomenon. Even if it is the reflection of a minority of the sample, this was a surprise, considering the incidence of violence against women. This result is quite similar to that of Ipsos (2014), where 6% of the sample stated that violence against women is not as spread as thought, which may be imputable to the attitude of denying the phenomenon. On the other hand, Gracia (2014) affirmed that violence in a family context is not only widespread, and 25% of the respondents of a 2010 European survey declared to know a female victim of violence (European Commission, 2010). Nevertheless, most of those who refuse to admit that IPV represents an important social and public health issue are often the same people that tend to blame the victims more and to report less cases of violence (Gracia, 2014).

As it pertains to perpetrators' legitimization (*Item 4*), 85% of the sample declared that they never justify a femicide. The most relevant data on this issue regard the tendency of many males (23.86% or 419 persons) to sometimes justify an abuser's acts. Similarly, in a research study from the University of Granada, conducted on a sample of 246 students, it emerged that men blame the victim more than women (Vidal-Fernández & Megías, 2014). This result is consistent with the literature: According to gender models, men seem to be more dominant than women and more likely to justify violent acts with their traditional and cultural gender stereotypes (Haj-Yahia & de

Zoysa, 2007; McCarry, 2010). Furthermore, a social climate of tolerance toward this form of violence can have an influence on women's response to their own victimization, by deterring them from seeking help or reporting the violence (Gracia, 2014). Only 7.23% of female students sometimes justify the perpetrator. Even if this represents a low percentage, it highlights a gender difference in attitude. In the literature, there are many studies in which women seemed to show a higher inclination to blame the victim: A research study from Uthman, Lawoko, and Moradi (2010) across 17 sub-Saharan African countries showed that twice as many women justified wife-beating than men did. In addition, 30 subjects out of 4,120 often find justification in the case of femicide; the intersex difference is relevant and the number of men supporting this choice (23) is higher than women (7). Analogously, in another study about honor-related violence comparing Moroccan, Cameroonian, and Italian students' attitudes (Caffaro, Mulas, & Schmidt, 2016), in Italian male students, the tendency to give less responsibility to the perpetrator of violence was higher than in female students.

In *Item 5*, dealing with the limits of individual freedom in a romantic relationship, the sample provided more homogenous results: 96% of the sample agreed with the relevance of freedom and individual space within a love relationship. Considering the gender differences, 93.79% of males and 98.22% of females share this point of view; these high percentages highlight a minimum relevant statistical difference between genders. The same difference is identified in attitudes regarding total sharing and controlling behavior, supported by 6.21% of males and only by 1.78% females. Previous studies showed that controlling behaviors are similar in men and women, and partner control may be equally important for both genders (Danel et al., 2016; Graham-Kevan & Archer, 2009; Papp, Liss, Erchull, Godfrey, & Waaland-Kreutzer, 2017). Controlling behavior can involve violence and abuse, and for men this behavior manifests as direct guarding, verbal insults directed at their partners, and actively controlling their partners actions (Danel et al., 2016). For women, this behavior can involve psychological aggression as a strategy to gain advantage over a male partner (Danel et al., 2016; Hughes, Massura, Anukem, & Cattage, 2016).

Concerning the last item, *Item 6*, about what the partners should limit in a romantic relationship, most of the students reported that individual freedom must be preserved. Specifically, 15% of the sample claims that it is relevant to limit the partner's dependence on his or her native family. As for the rest of the sample, 7.5% supported the limiting of social network contacts and direct contact with "not-shared" friends of the opposite sex. Like in the previous item, females tended to have a propensity for individual freedom and independence from the native family. On the other hand, males show a higher degree of controlling behavior. There is a minimum of relevant statistical data about gender differences regarding direct contact with the opposite sex, but male students tended to be more limiting. For instance, online social networks, such as Facebook, are identified as a jealousy-evoking environment: a place where real or imagined threats to romantic relationships could be detected. Therefore, not-shared Facebook friends of the opposite sex could be uncomfortable or threatening presences, and a reason why some of the students think that there is a need to limit social network contacts.

4. Conclusion

The students of our sample appear to be sensitive to relevant violence topics, but they highlighted a lack of confidence in legal institutions and implementation of the law. Moreover, they reported being emotionally stricken, especially by repeated acts of violence, constantly perpetrated over an extended period. As it pertains to the incidence of the phenomenon, according to ISTAT data from 2014, violence episodes decreased, but the gravity of the episodes grew. Students' beliefs appeared to be in contrast with this data: Some of them did not believe in a drop in the rate of violence, and their skepticism is likely ascribable to a low level of confidence in the implementations of the legislative system. Most of the students in this study never find a justification for committing femicide; only a core group answered "sometimes" or "often" at the justification statements. Individual freedom emerges as a crucial factor, probably due to the respondents wishing for a healthy and satisfying romantic relationship (Sadikaj et al., 2015), without constraints imposed by the partner.

Looking at the gender differences, the male students tended to justify the perpetrators of IPV more than the females. Furthermore, more males claimed that the phenomenon was not something that directly concerned them. As previously stated, the reason for this difference could be explained as a more distant view of the phenomenon compared to the perception of females, probably due to cultural differences.

5. Limitations and future research

The main strength of the present study is represented by our questionnaire, the first attempt to measure and observe the attitudes toward violence against women in the Italian context. The tool is easy and quick to fill, and it could be applied to a variety of individuals. Nevertheless, it also presents some limitations.

One of the more important limits concerns *Item 3*, with the option “None of the aforementioned sentences,” which gives the participant the chance to abstain from answer, limiting the investigation. Another limit of this study could be the complexity involved with comparing our results with other studies about violence against women, because our tool does not completely overlap with those of others measuring the same phenomenon.

The results of this project indicate what will be useful in improving the questionnaire to reduce the limits that emerged in our analysis. In future research, it will be appropriate to include not only students but a great variety of subjects, and to extend the investigation to all Italian territories, to examine the potential regional differences and find the best way to reduce the negative attitudes that emerged. It may be advantageous to implement a new research study in which the attitudes will be analyzed both before and after a specific training session addressing these issues. Another important objective for future research could be an attempt to understand the origins of these negative attitudes, with the support of other available tools concerning this phenomenon.

Funding

The authors received no direct funding for this research.

Competing interests

The authors declare no competing interests.

Author details

Luca Rollè¹
E-mail: l.rolle@unito.it
ORCID ID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4398-8683>
Cristina Sechi²
E-mail: cristina.sechi79@gmail.com
Luciana Patteri¹
E-mail: luciana.patteri@edu.unito.it
Giulia Costa¹
E-mail: giulia.costa306@edu.unito.it
Maurizio Bergaglia¹
E-mail: maurizio.bergaglia@gmail.com
Lella Menzio³
E-mail: lellamenzio@yahoo.it
Gabriele Traverso³
E-mail: gabriele.traverso@tin.it
Piera Brustia¹
ORCID ID: <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-9468-2350>
¹ Department of Psychology, University of Torino, Via Po 14 - 10123, Torino, Italy.
² Department of Pedagogy, Psychology and Philosophy, University of Cagliari, Via is Mirrionis 1 - 09121, Cagliari, Italy.
³ Telefono Rosa Torino, Via Assietta, 13/a - 10128, Torino, Italy.

Citation information

Cite this article as: Intimate partner violence: Attitudes in a sample of Italian students, Luca Rollè, Cristina Sechi, Luciana Patteri, Giulia Costa, Maurizio Bergaglia, Lella

Menzio, Gabriele Traverso & Piera Brustia, *Cogent Psychology* (2018), 5: 1514960.

References

- Baldry, A. C., & Winkel, F. W. (2008). *Intimate partner violence prevention and intervention: The risk assessment and management approach*. Hauppauge, NY, US, Nova Publishers.
- Black, M. C., Basile, K. C., Breiding, M. J., Smith, S. G., Walters, M. L., Merrick, M. T., & Stevens, M. R. (2011). *The National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey (NISVS): 2010 summary report*. Atlanta, GA: National Center for Injury Prevention and Control, Center for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved from http://www.cdc.gov/ViolencePrevention/pdf/NISVS_Report2010-a.pdf
- Bryant, S. A., & Spencer, G. A. (2003). University students' attitudes about attributing blame in domestic violence. *Journal of Family Violence*, 18(6), 369–376. doi:10.1023/A:1026205817132
- Bucci, L. (2012). An overview of the legal and cultural issues for migrant Muslim women of the European union: A focus on domestic violence and Italy. *Crime, Law and Social Change*, 58(1), 75–92. doi:10.1007/s10611-012-9370-5
- BUR (2016) Retrieved from <http://www.regione.piemonte.it/governo/bollettino/abbonati/2016/08/attach/l201604.pdf>
- Caffaro, F., Mulas, C., & Schmidt, S. S. (2016). The perception of honour-related violence in female and male University students from Morocco, Cameroon and Italy. *Sex Roles*, 75(11/12), 555–572. doi:10.1007/s11199-015-0576-8
- Chiara, O., Mazzali, C., Lelli, S., Mariani, A., & Cimbanassi, S. (2013). A population based study of hospitalised seriously injured in a region of Northern Italy. *World*

- Journal of Emergency Surgery*, 8, 32. doi:10.1186/1749-7922-8-32
- COE - Council of Europe. (2011). *Convention on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence*. Istanbul: Council of Europe Treaty Series - No. 210.
- Crabtree-Nelson, S., Grossman, S. F., & Lundy, M. (2016). A call to action: Domestic violence education in social work. *Social Work*, 61(4), 359–361. doi:10.1093/sw/sww05
- Danel, D. P., Siennicka, A., Glińska, K., Fedurek, P., Nowak-Szczepańska, N., Jankowska, E. A., & Lewandowski, Z. (2016). Female perception of a partner's mate value discrepancy and controlling behaviour in romantic relationships. *Acta Ethologica*, 20(1), 1–8. doi:10.1007/s10211-016-0240-5
- De Koker, P., Mathews, C., Zuch, M., Bastien, S., & Mason-Jones, A. J. (2014). A systematic review of interventions for preventing adolescent intimate partner violence. *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 54(1), 3–13. doi:10.1016/j.jadohealth.2013.08.008
- Eckhardt, C. I., Murphy, C. M., Whitaker, D. J., Sprunger, J., Dykstra, R., & Woodard, K. (2013). The effectiveness of intervention programs for perpetrators and victims of intimate partner violence. *Partner Abuse*, 4(2), 196–231. doi:10.1891/1946-6560.4.2.196
- Etter, G. W., & Birzer, M. L. (2007). Domestic violence abusers: A descriptive study of the characteristics of defenders in protection from abuse orders in Sedgwick County, Kansas. *Journal of Family Violence*, 22, 113–119. doi:10.1007/s10896-006-9047-x
- European Commission. (2010). *Domestic violence against women report*. Brussels: Directorate-General for Justice. Retrieved from: http://ec.europa.eu/public_opinion/archives/ebs/ebs_344_en.pdf
- FRA - European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights. (2014). *Violence against women: An EU-wide survey. Main results*. Vienna, AT: EU.
- Gerino, E., Calderera, A. M., Curti, L., Brustia, P., & Rollè, L. (2018). Intimate partner violence in the golden age: systematic review of risk and protective factors. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 9, 1595. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01595
- Goodman, L. A., Banyard, V., Woulfe, J., Ash, S., & Mattern, G. (2016a). Bringing a network-oriented approach to domestic violence services: A focus group exploration of promising practices. *Violence against Women*, 22(1), 64–89. doi:10.1177/1077801215599080
- Goodman, L. A., Fauci, J. E., Sullivan, C. M., DiGiovanni, C. D., & Wilson, J. M. (2016b). Domestic violence survivors' empowerment and mental health: Exploring the role of the alliance with advocates. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 86(3), 286–296. doi:10.1037/ort0000137
- Gracia, E. (2014). Intimate partner violence against women and victim-blaming attitudes among Europeans. *Bulletin of the World Health Organization*, 92(5), 380–381. doi:10.2471/BLT.13.131391
- Graham-Kevan, N., & Archer, J. (2009). Control tactics and partner violence in heterosexual relationships. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, 30(6), 445–452. doi:10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2009.06.007
- Gribaldo, A. (2014). The paradoxical victim: Intimate violence narratives on trial in Italy. *American Ethnologist*, 41(4), 743–756. doi:10.1111/amet.12109
- Haj-Yahia, M. M., & de Zoysa, P. (2007). Beliefs of Sri Lankan medical students about wife beating. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 22(1), 26–49. doi:10.1177/0886260506294995
- Hester, M., & Westmarland, N. (2005). *Tackling domestic violence: Effective interventions and approaches*. London: Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate.
- Hughes, H. M., Massura, C. E., Anukem, O. V., & Cattage, J. S. (2016). Women college students' reasons for engaging in psychological dating aggression: A qualitative examination. *Journal of Family Violence*, 31(2), 239–249. doi:10.1007/s10896-015-9758-y
- Ipsos (2014). Gli italiani e la percezione della violenza contro le donne [Italians and the perception of violence against women]. Milan: WeWorld Onlus. Retrieved from http://www.intervita.it/public/CMS/Files/616/ROSA%20SHOCKING_bassa_singole.pdf.
- ISTAT (2014). La violenza contro le donne dentro e fuori la famiglia [Violence against women inside and outside the family]. Retrieved from <http://www.istat.it/it/archivio/161716>.
- Jackson, N. A. (Ed.). (2007). *Encyclopedia of domestic violence*. New York: Routledge.
- Jahanfar, S., Janssen, P. A., Howard, L. M., & Dowswell, T. (2013). Interventions for preventing or reducing domestic violence against pregnant women. *The Cochrane Database of Systematic Review*. 2. doi:10.1002/14651858.CD009414.pub2
- Jiao, Y., Sun, I. Y., Farmer, A. K., & Lin, K. (2016). College students' definitions of intimate partner violence: A comparative study of three Chinese societies. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence*, 31(7), 1208–1229. doi:10.1177/0886260514564162
- Lin, K., Sun, I. Y., Wu, Y., & Liu, J. (2016). College students' attitudes toward intimate partner violence: A comparative study of China and the US. *Journal of Family Violence*, 31(2), 179–189. doi:10.1007/s10896-015-9759-
- Lloyd, M., Ramon, S., Vakalopoulou, A., Videmšek, P., Meffan, C., Roszczynska-Michta, J., & Rollè, L. (2017). Women's experiences of domestic violence and mental health: Findings from a European empowerment project. *Psychology of Violence. Advance Online Publication*, 7, 478–487. doi:10.1037/vio0000111
- MacDowell, E. L., & Cammett, A. (2016). Models of invisibility: Rendering domestic and other gendered violence visible to students through clinical law teaching. *Violence against Women*, 22(12), 1438–1450. doi:10.1177/1077801215625853
- Mamo, C., Bianco, S., Dalmaso, M., Grotto, M., Mondo, L., & Penasso, M. (2015). Are emergency department admissions in the past two years predictors of femicide? Results from a case-Control study in Italy. *Journal of Family Violence*, 30(7), 853–858. doi:10.1007/s10896-015-9726-6
- Mauri, E. M., Nespoli, A., Persico, G., & Zoppi, V. F. (2015). Domestic violence during pregnancy: Midwives' experiences. *Midwifery*, 31(5), 498–504. doi:10.1016/j.midw.2015.02.002
- McCarry, M. (2010). Becoming a 'proper man': Young people's attitudes about interpersonal violence and perceptions of gender. *Gender and Education*, 22(1), 17–30. doi:10.1080/09540250902749083
- McQueeney, K. (2016). Teaching domestic violence in the new millennium: Intersectionality as a framework for social change. *Violence against Women*, 22(12), 1463–1475. doi:10.1177/1077801215626808
- Meyersfeld, B. (2016). A Theory of Domestic Violence in International Law. Yale Law School Dissertations. <http://digitalcommons.law.yale.edu/ylsd/3/>
- Miragoli, S., Camisasca, E., & Di Blasio, P. (2017). Child sexual behaviors in school context: Age and gender differences. *Journal of Child Sexual Abuse*, 26(2), 213–231. doi:10.1080/10538712.2017.1280866

- Nayak, M. B., Byrne, C. A., Martin, M. K., & Abraham, A. G. (2003). Attitudes toward violence against women: A cross-nation study. *Sex Roles, 49*(7), 333–342. doi:10.1023/A:1025108103617
- Papp, L. J., Liss, M., Erchull, M. J., Godfrey, H., & Waaland-Kreutzer, L. (2017). The dark side of heterosexual romance: Endorsement of romantic beliefs relates to intimate partner violence. *Sex Roles, 76*(1–2), 99–109. doi:10.1007/s11199-016-0668-0
- Policastro, C., & Payne, B. K. (2013). The blameworthy victim: Domestic violence myths and the criminalization of victimhood. *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma, 22*(4), 329–347. doi:10.1080/10926771.2013.775985
- Rollè, L., Giardina, G., Caldarera, A. M., Gerino, E., & Brustia, P. (2018). When Intimate Partner Violence Meets Same Sex Couples: A Review of Same Sex Intimate Partner Violence. *Frontiers in Psychology, 9*, 1506. doi:10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01506
- Ramsay, J., Rutterford, C., Gregory, A., Dunne, D., Eldridge, S., Sharp, D. & Feder, G. (2012). Domestic violence: knowledge, attitudes, and clinical practice of selected UK primary healthcare clinicians, *Br J Gen Pract, 62* (602), 647–655, doi:10.3399/bjgp12X654623
- Rodgers, K. T. (2016). *Domestic Violence Survivors: Interactions and Attitudes Toward Law Enforcement* (Doctoral dissertation, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology).
- Romito, P., & Gerin, D. (2002). Asking patients about violence: A survey of 510 women attending social and health services in Trieste, Italy. *Social Science & Medicine, 54*(12), 1813–1824. doi:10.1016/S0277-9536(01)00149-6
- Russell, B., Kraus, S. W., Chappelle, K. M., & Oswald, D. (2016). Perceptions of blame in intimate partner violence the role of the perpetrator's ability to arouse fear of injury in the victim. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 31*(17), 3664–3680. doi:10.1177/0886260516646999
- Sadikaj, G., Rappaport, L. M., Moskowitz, D. S., Zuroff, D. C., Koestner, R., & Powers, T. (2015). Consequences of interpersonal spin on couple-relevant goal progress and relationship satisfaction in romantic relationships. *Journal Of Personality & Social Psychology, 109*(4), 722–737. doi:10.1037/pspp0000043
- Sargent, K., McDonald, R., Vu, N., & Jouriles, E. (2016). Evaluating an online program to help children exposed to domestic violence: Results of two randomized controlled trials. *Journal Of Family Violence, 31*(5), 647–654. doi:10.1007/s10896-016-9800-8
- Signorelli, M. S., Arcidiacono, E., Musumeci, G., Di Nuovo, S., & Aguglia, E. (2014). Detecting domestic violence: Italian validation of revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS-2). *Journal of Family Violence, 29*(4), 361–369. doi:10.1007/s10896-014-9594-5
- Sun, I., Wu, Y., Huang, L., Lin, Y., Li, J., & Su, M. (2012). Preferences for police response to domestic violence: A comparison of college students in three Chinese societies. *Journal Of Family Violence, 27*(2), 133–144. doi:10.1007/s10896-011-9409-x
- Sylaska, K. M., & Walters, A. S. (2014). Testing the extent of the gender trap: College students' perceptions of and reactions to intimate partner violence. *Sex Roles, 70*(3–4), 134–145. doi:10.1007/s11199-014-0344-1
- Tavoli, Z., Tavoli, A., Amirpour, R., Hosseini, R., & Montazeri, A. (2016). Quality of life in women who were exposed to domestic violence during pregnancy. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth, 16*(1), 19. doi:10.1186/s12884-016-0810-6
- TELEFONO ROSA (2017). Retrieved from <http://telefonorosa.altervista.org/pdf/Report8marzo2016.pdf>
- Triantafyllou, D., Wang, C., & North, C. S. (2016). Correlates of duration of intimate partner violence among women seeking services at a domestic violence support center. *Journal of Interpersonal Violence, 31*(1), 1–12. doi:10.1177/0886260516647522
- Ufficiali, G. (2013). *Gazzetta Ufficiale Della Repubblica Italiana- Serie Generale, 242*, 36–45.
- Uthman, O. A., Lawoko, S., & Moradi, T. (2010). Sex disparities in attitudes towards intimate partner violence against women in sub-Saharan Africa: A socio-ecological analysis. *BMC Public Health, 10*(1), 223. doi:10.1186/1471-2458-10-223
- Vidal-Fernández, A., & Megías, J. L. (2014). Attributions of blame to battered women when they are perceived as feminists or as “Difficult to deal with”. *The Spanish Journal of Psychology, 17*, E21. doi:10.1017/sjp.2014.26
- Walby, S., Allen, J., & Simmons, J. (2004). *Domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking: Findings from the British Crime Survey*. London: Home Office Research, Development and Statistics Directorate.
- World Health Organization. (2013). *Responding to intimate partner violence and sexual violence against women, 2013*. Italy: WHO Press. ISBN: 978 92 4 154859 5
- World Health Organization (2016). Retrieved from <http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs239/en/>
- Wu, Y., Button, D. M., Smolter, N., & Poteyeva, M. (2013). Public responses to intimate partner violence: Comparing preferences of Chinese and American college students. *Violence and Victims, 28*(2), 303–323. doi:10.1891/0886-6708.VV-D-12-00001



© 2018 The Author(s). This open access article is distributed under a Creative Commons Attribution (CC-BY) 4.0 license.

You are free to:

Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format.

Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially.

The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms.

Under the following terms:

Attribution — You must give appropriate credit, provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made.

You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use.

No additional restrictions

You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits.

***Cogent Psychology* (ISSN: 2331-1908) is published by Cogent OA, part of Taylor & Francis Group.**

Publishing with Cogent OA ensures:

- Immediate, universal access to your article on publication
- High visibility and discoverability via the Cogent OA website as well as Taylor & Francis Online
- Download and citation statistics for your article
- Rapid online publication
- Input from, and dialog with, expert editors and editorial boards
- Retention of full copyright of your article
- Guaranteed legacy preservation of your article
- Discounts and waivers for authors in developing regions

Submit your manuscript to a Cogent OA journal at www.CogentOA.com

