

**UNIVERSIDAD COMPLUTENSE DE MADRID**

**FACULTAD DE PSICOLOGÍA**



**TESIS DOCTORAL**

Evaluación del apego en hombres condenados por violencia de género

MEMORIA PARA OPTAR AL GRADO DE DOCTORA

PRESENTADA POR

Iria de la Osa Subtil

DIRIGIDA POR

José Luis Graña Gómez  
Andrés Arias Astray

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A mi hijo Irai,  
mi mejor maestro en la vida.

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## Resumen

La presente tesis doctoral aborda el papel del estilo de apego en la predisposición, manifestación y perpetuación de comportamientos violentos en hombres condenados por delitos de violencia de género. Se dio respuesta al objetivo general a través de cuatro estudios.

En el primer estudio (capítulo 6), se realizó un metanálisis para conocer la relación entre los estilos de apego inseguros (ansioso y evitativo) y los tipos de agresión (general, psicológica y física). Los resultados sugieren que existe relación entre el estilo de apego ansioso y la agresión física y psicológica. Por su parte, el estilo de apego evitativo se asoció con la violencia general.

El segundo estudio (capítulo 7) tuvo como objetivo obtener evidencias de validez del Cuestionario de Apego Adulto (CAA) en una muestra de hombres condenados por violencia de género. Se identificaron cuatro estilos de apego: seguro, ansioso, evitativo y temeroso, con distribuciones desiguales en la muestra.

En el tercer estudio (capítulo 8), se examinaron las relaciones entre los estilos de apego inseguro y los diferentes tipos de violencia en una muestra de hombres condenados por violencia contra su pareja. Los resultados indicaron que los estilos de apego inseguro, especialmente los estilos ansioso y evitativo, están significativamente relacionados con la agresión en las relaciones de pareja.

En el cuarto estudio (capítulo 9), se desarrolló una tipología de hombres condenados por violencia de género en España, integrando múltiples dimensiones como la intensidad y tipo de agresión, experiencias previas de violencia, características psicopatológicas y el estilo de apego. Tres clases de agresores fueron identificadas: generalmente violentos, disfóricos/limítrofes y aquellos con violencia exclusivamente familiar.

Finalmente, las conclusiones generales destacan la importancia del apego en relación con la agresión, pero también la diversidad de variables implicadas en la manifestación de la misma. Se

destaca influencia de otros factores contextuales y personales en este fenómeno, y la necesidad de intervenciones terapéuticas multifacéticas y preventivas que aborden esta compleja interacción de factores de riesgo y protección.

*Palabras clave:* violencia en la pareja, agresor, apego, apego ansioso, apego evitativo

## Abstract

This doctoral thesis explores the role of attachment style in the predisposition, manifestation, and perpetuation of violent behavior among men convicted of gender violence crimes. The primary objective was addressed through four studies.

In the first study (Chapter 6), a meta-analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between insecure attachment styles (anxious and avoidant) and types of aggression (general, psychological, and physical). The results suggest that the anxious attachment style is related to both physical and psychological aggression. The avoidant attachment style was associated with general violence.

The second study (Chapter 7) aimed to validate the Adult Attachment Questionnaire (AAQ) in a sample of men convicted of gender-based violence. Four attachment styles were identified—secure, anxious, avoidant, and fearful—with varying distributions across the sample.

In the third study (Chapter 8), the relationships between insecure attachment styles and different types of violence were examined in a sample of men convicted of intimate partner violence. The findings indicated that insecure attachment styles, particularly anxious and avoidant, are significantly related to aggression in intimate partner relationships.

The fourth study (Chapter 9) developed a typology of men convicted of gender-based violence in Spain, integrating multiple dimensions such as the intensity and type of aggression, previous experiences of violence, psychopathological characteristics, and attachment style. Three classes of aggressors were identified: generally violent, dysphoric/borderline, and those with exclusively family violence.

In conclusion, the findings underscore the significance of attachment in relation to aggression, as well as the diversity of variables involved in the manifestation of aggression. The influence of other contextual and personal factors in this phenomenon is highlighted, along with

the need for multifaceted and preventive therapeutic interventions that address the complex interaction of risk and protective factors.

*Keywords:* intimate partner violence, aggressor, attachment, anxious attachment, avoidant attachment

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## **Capítulo 1. Introducción a la violencia de género contra la pareja (VGCP).**

### **1.1. Conceptualización y definición de la VGCP**

La violencia de género contra la pareja (VGCP) ha sido históricamente vista como una cuestión del ámbito privado. A lo largo de la segunda mitad del siglo XX esto cambia, suponiendo punto de inflexión significativo en la percepción y tratamiento de este problema. Con el avance de los movimientos por los derechos de las mujeres y el desarrollo de marcos legislativos específicos, la violencia de género comenzó a ser reconocida como una grave violación de los derechos humanos y un problema de salud pública, esta transformación fue generando, a su vez, un gradual interés científico sobre el fenómeno (Fernández-Montalvo & Echeburúa, 1997).

La creciente sensibilización social sobre la violencia de género impulsó cambios necesarios para entender mejor el fenómeno y sus consecuencias. A nivel internacional, la Carta de las Naciones Unidas (1945) y la Declaración Universal de los Derechos Humanos (1948) establecieron los principios fundamentales de igualdad y derechos humanos. Instrumentos específicos como la Convención sobre la Eliminación de Todas las Formas de Discriminación contra la Mujer (CEDAW, 1979) y la Declaración sobre la Eliminación de la Violencia contra la Mujer (1993) subrayaron la importancia de abordar la desigualdad de género y la violencia contra las mujeres.

Las Conferencias Mundiales sobre la Mujer, promovidas por Naciones Unidas, celebradas en México (1975), Copenhague (1980), Nairobi (1985) y Beijing (1995), fueron fundamentales para visibilizar el problema y promover la adopción de medidas internacionales. La Conferencia de Nairobi de 1985, en particular, adoptó una perspectiva integral para erradicar la violencia de género, promoviendo políticas de igualdad en todos los ámbitos de la vida pública y privada. La Conferencia de Beijing de 1995 avanzó aún más al definir claramente la violencia de género y destacar su raíz en las relaciones de poder desiguales entre hombres y mujeres.

En el contexto Europeo, el tratado de Ámsterdam de 1997 reforzó la obligación de la UE de respetar los derechos fundamentales y promover la igualdad entre hombres y mujeres. La

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Iniciativa Daphne, creada en 1997, fue uno de los primeros planes de la Comisión Europea para combatir la violencia contra mujeres y niños, enfocándose en la investigación, formación e información para desarrollar estrategias de colaboración y buenas prácticas. En junio de 2000, la Sesión Especial de la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas, titulada "*Las mujeres en el año 2000: igualdad, desarrollo y paz en el siglo XXI*", revisó los avances desde la Declaración y Plataforma de Acción de Beijing, subrayando nuevamente la importancia de eliminar todas las formas de violencia contra las mujeres para lograr la igualdad, el desarrollo y la paz.

En España, la promulgación de la Constitución de 1978, que prohibió explícitamente la discriminación por razón de género, y la entrada en vigor de la Ley Orgánica 1/2004 de Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género representaron pasos decisivos en la lucha contra la violencia de género. Esta ley estableció medidas específicas para proteger a las víctimas y prevenir la violencia, convirtiéndose en un marco normativo crucial para abordar esta problemática.

En la Declaración sobre la eliminación de la violencia contra la mujer, aprobada por la Asamblea General de las Naciones Unidas el 20 de diciembre de 1993, se define la violencia de género como: "*Todo acto de violencia basado en la pertenencia al sexo femenino que tenga o pueda tener como resultado un daño o sufrimiento físico, sexual o psicológico para la mujer, así como las amenazas de tales actos, la coacción o la privación arbitraria de la libertad, tanto si se producen en la vida pública como en la vida privada*". Posteriormente se amplía esta definición para incluir el uso deliberado de la fuerza física o el poder, ya sea en grado de amenaza o efectivo, contra uno mismo, otra persona o un grupo o comunidad, que cause o tenga muchas probabilidades de causar lesiones, muerte, daños psicológicos, trastornos del desarrollo o privaciones (*Organización Mundial de la Salud, [OMS], 2002*).

Es esencial distinguir entre los términos violencia de género y violencia doméstica. En el contexto español, el primer concepto hace referencia específicamente a la violencia ejercida de un hombre hacia una mujer que mantenga o haya mantenido una relación conyugal o afectiva aun sin convivencia (I.N.E., 2013, p. 19), en la Ley Orgánica 1/2004 de Medidas de Protección Integral

contra la Violencia de Género en España se reconoce la discriminación estructural que subyace a este tipo de violencia. Por otro lado, la violencia doméstica abarca cualquier forma de violencia que ocurre dentro del núcleo familiar, independientemente del género de las víctimas y los agresores. Esto incluye la violencia contra niños, ancianos y otros miembros del hogar y la violencia de contra la pareja, excluyendo la de género (artículo 173.2 del Código Penal)

## 1.2. Tipos de VGCP

La violencia se puede manifestar de múltiples formas, con características concretas y diferentes consecuencias para las víctimas. La definición de violencia de la OMS, como uso intencional de la fuerza física o el poder, ya sea de manera real como en amenaza, contra uno mismo, otra persona o una comunidad, que cause o tenga una alta probabilidad de causar lesiones, muerte, daños psicológicos, trastornos del desarrollo o privaciones (Krug et al., 2002). Esta definición abarca una amplia gama de actos que van más allá de la violencia física para incluir amenazas e intimidaciones.

- **Violencia física:** La violencia física incluye cualquier acto intencional cuyo objetivo sea causar daño físico (Krook et al., 2020). Esto abarca desde empujones y bofetadas hasta agresiones más severas como el uso de armas, palizas, estrangulamientos incluso homicidio o asesinato (Redondo, 2012). Este tipo de violencia también contempla la omisión de ayuda ante lesiones o enfermedades. La violencia física es quizá la forma de violencia evidente, caracterizada por actos de agresión que resultan en daño corporal. Se ha observado que aquellos con actitudes permisivas o incluso positivas hacia la VGCP muestran una mayor propensión a ejercerla (DeWall et al., 2011).
- **Violencia psicológica:** se refiere a cualquier conducta que atenta contra la integridad emocional de la víctima, con el objetivo de intimidarla, desvalorizarla, o generar sentimientos de culpa y sufrimiento (Echeburúa & Muñoz, 2017). La violencia psicológica se manifiesta en forma de insultos, humillaciones, amenazas (con hacer daño, con quitar a los niños), intimidaciones (por ej. destruir cosas) o comportamientos de control coercitivo como aislamiento social o el monitoreo o control de los movimientos y

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la restricción financiera o médica (Dokkedahl et al., 2019). La violencia psicológica puede ser difícil de identificar debido a su naturaleza insidiosa y gradual. Los agresores pueden comenzar con conductas sutiles, como la minusvaloración de la capacidad intelectual o el atractivo de la víctima, para luego pasar a formas más explícitas de violencia psicológica. La dificultad para precisar los límites de la agresión psicológica y su impacto en la víctima contribuye a la dispersión de los términos para denominarla. Algunos de estos términos incluyen abuso emocional, abuso verbal, terrorismo íntimo y violencia invisible (Blázquez-Alonso et al., 2010). La intencionalidad detrás de las palabras juega un papel crucial en definir un acto como abusivo (Martin et al., 1997). Las repercusiones de la violencia verbal trascienden el daño inmediato, afectando negativamente el bienestar psicológico, fisiológico, conductual e interpersonal de las víctimas (Aloia & Worley, 2019). Son comunes consecuencias como la depresión y el deterioro de la autoestima, lo que evidencia la severidad de este tipo de abuso (Pico-Alfonso et al. 2006; Lammers et al., 2005; Spencer et al. 2022).

- **Violencia sexual:** incluye cualquier actividad sexual no deseada impuesta a la mujer por su pareja a través de la intimidación o la coacción. Esto puede incluir desde abusos sexuales sin contacto físico directo hasta violaciones. La violencia sexual también abarca la coerción para participar en actos sexuales humillantes o dolorosos, así como la presión verbal para mantener relaciones sexuales no deseadas (Krug et al., 2003) impliquen estas contacto o penetración o no, como por ejemplo exponerse a una situación sexual no deseada como pueden ser grabaciones, visualización de pornografía o difusión de material íntimo (OMS, 2022). Esta forma de violencia ataca no sólo la integridad física de la víctima, sino también su dignidad y autonomía, negándole el derecho a disponer de su propio cuerpo (Marugán, 2014). La investigación ha identificado la masculinidad hostil y una orientación sexual impersonal como factores de riesgo significativos (Abbey et al., 2011). La prevalencia de la agresión sexual varía ampliamente, resaltando la importancia de una respuesta integral a este problema (Swartout, 2013).
- **Acoso:** se refiere a una serie de comportamientos repetidos y persistentes de atención y contacto no deseado por la víctima, que crea un ambiente de miedo y ansiedad para la misma Este tipo de violencia incluye conductas como llamadas telefónicas constantes,

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seguir a la víctima, espiar y aparecer en lugares no deseados (Echeburúa & Muñoz 2017). Con el avance de la tecnología, el acoso también se manifiesta como ciberacoso, que incluye el envío de mensajes no deseados, la publicación de contenido íntimo en redes sociales y la vigilancia de actividades en línea (McEwan et al., 2017; Duerksen & Woodin, 2019).

- **Violencia económica:** La violencia económica se refiere a las conductas dirigidas a controlar estrictamente el manejo del dinero de la víctima, obligándola a rendir cuentas de todos sus gastos y, en muchos casos, impidiéndole trabajar o acceder a sus propios ingresos. Esta forma de maltrato busca crear una dependencia económica, limitando la autonomía de la mujer quedando atrapada en la relación (Lasheras & Pires, 2003).
- **Violencia contra los menores:** La violencia contra los menores en el contexto de la violencia de pareja se manifiesta de diversas maneras. Puede incluir la manipulación emocional de los hijos para que se vuelvan contra la víctima, el uso de los niños como herramientas para ejercer control y presión sobre la mujer, la exposición de los menores a situaciones de violencia que afectan su desarrollo psicológico y emocional e incluso el asesinato de los menores. El maltrato infantil en este contexto no sólo tiene consecuencias directas sobre los menores, sino que también profundiza el sufrimiento de la madre al ver a sus hijos perjudicados (Boeckel et al. 2014; Rivera et al. 2018).

### 1.3. Epidemiología de la VGCP

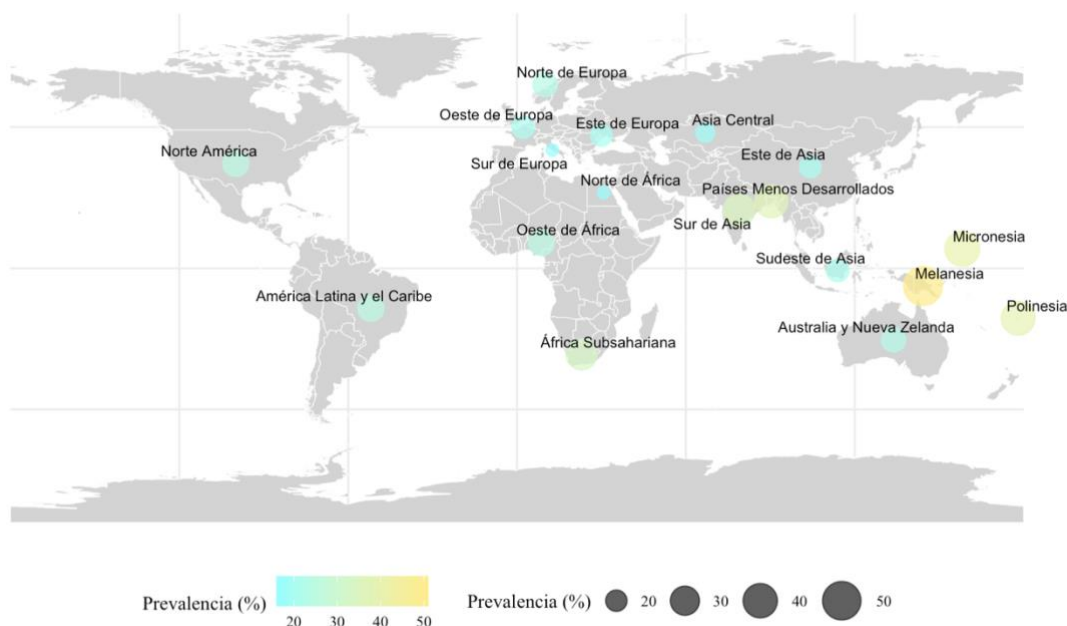
Se estima que casi un 30% de las mujeres han sido víctimas de algún tipo de violencia por parte de sus parejas y el 38% de las mujeres asesinadas lo han sido por sus cónyuges (OMS, 2013, 2021). Aunque este fenómeno se trata de un problema global, su incidencia y características varían significativamente dependiendo del contexto económico y cultural de cada región (Catalano, 2013; Goodman & Epstein, 2008).

Globalmente, podemos observar (ver Figura 1) que aproximadamente un tercio de las mujeres que han mantenido relaciones afectivas reportan haber sufrido violencia física o sexual a

manos de sus parejas. Sin embargo, esta prevalencia varía notablemente según la región. En los países de ingresos altos, como Australia, Canadá, Dinamarca, Finlandia, Alemania, Japón, Nueva Zelanda, Polonia, España, Suecia, Suiza, Reino Unido, Irlanda del Norte y Estados Unidos, la prevalencia es del 23,2%. En contraste, en la región del Sudeste de Asia, esta cifra asciende al 37,7% (WHO, 2021). Las tasas más bajas de violencia de pareja se encuentran en Europa (16-23%), Asia Central (18%), Asia Oriental (20%), el Sudeste Asiático (21%), y en Australia y Nueva Zelanda (23%). Las mayores prevalencias se observan en los "Países Menos Desarrollados", con un 37%, y en las subregiones de Oceanía: Melanesia, Micronesia y Polinesia. (WHO, 2021). Las regiones de Asia Meridional (35%) y África Subsahariana (33%) tienen tasas elevadas de violencia de pareja a lo largo de la vida.

### Figura 1.

Prevalencia mundial de VGCP física y sexual reportada por las víctimas en algún momento de su vida.

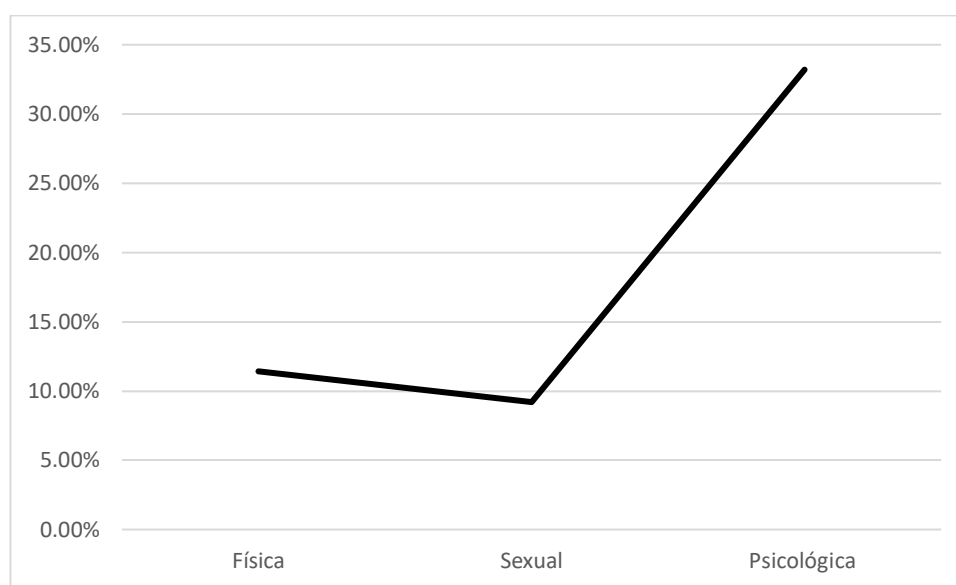


Nota: Grafico de elaboración propia a partir de los datos proporcionados por “*Violence against women prevalence estimates, 2018*” (OMS, 2021)

En el contexto europeo, la prevalencia de la violencia contra las mujeres sigue siendo alarmante. Según un informe de la Delegación del Gobierno contra la Violencia de Género (2022), el 28,7% de las mujeres (equivalente a 4.806.054 mujeres) entre 16 y 74 años han experimentado violencia física o sexual por parte de su pareja actual o anterior. Además, el 13% de las mujeres europeas encuestadas reportaron haber sufrido violencia física y/o sexual por parte de su pareja o expareja en los últimos 12 meses. Por otro lado, el 43% de las mujeres informaron haber sido víctimas de violencia psicológica por parte de su pareja o expareja en algún momento de su vida.

**Figura 2.**

Prevalencia de mujeres que han sufrido violencia física, sexual o psicológica en el entorno de la pareja en España a lo largo de su vida.



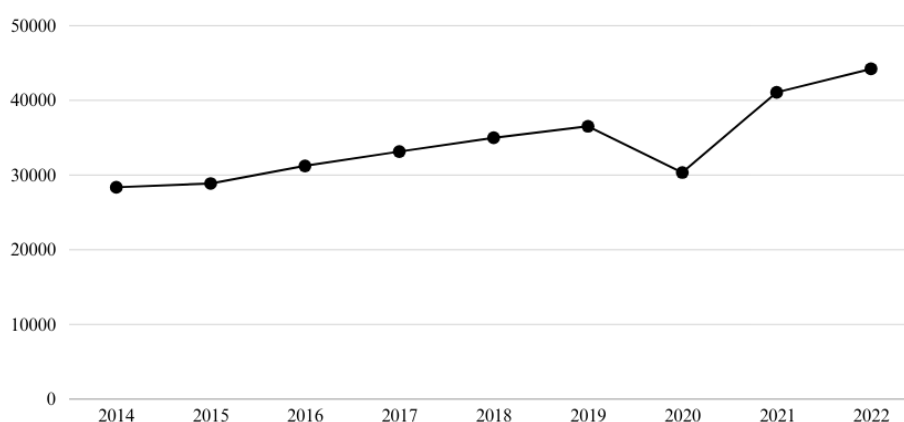
*Nota:* Gráfico de elaboración propia a partir de los datos de la Macroencuesta de violencia contra la mujer de 2019.

Asimismo, en España, según los datos de la Macroencuesta de Violencia contra la Mujer de 2019, el 18,3% de las mujeres encuestadas habían sufrido violencia física o sexual por parte de su pareja o expareja en algún momento de su vida, aunque según los datos de la misma encuesta, la mayoría de mujeres españolas que ha sufrido VGCP ha sido de tipo psicológico (ver Figura 2). Además, los datos de mortalidad indican que, en 2019, 56 mujeres fueron asesinadas por sus parejas

o exparejas en España. Según datos de la Delegación del Gobierno contra la Violencia de Género, en los tres últimos años las cifras se mantienen. En el año 2021 y 2022 murieron 49 mujeres por cada año, ascendiendo la cifra a 58 mujeres asesinadas en 2023.

### Figura 3

Numero de condenas por un delito de violencia de género en España desde 2014 hasta 2022.

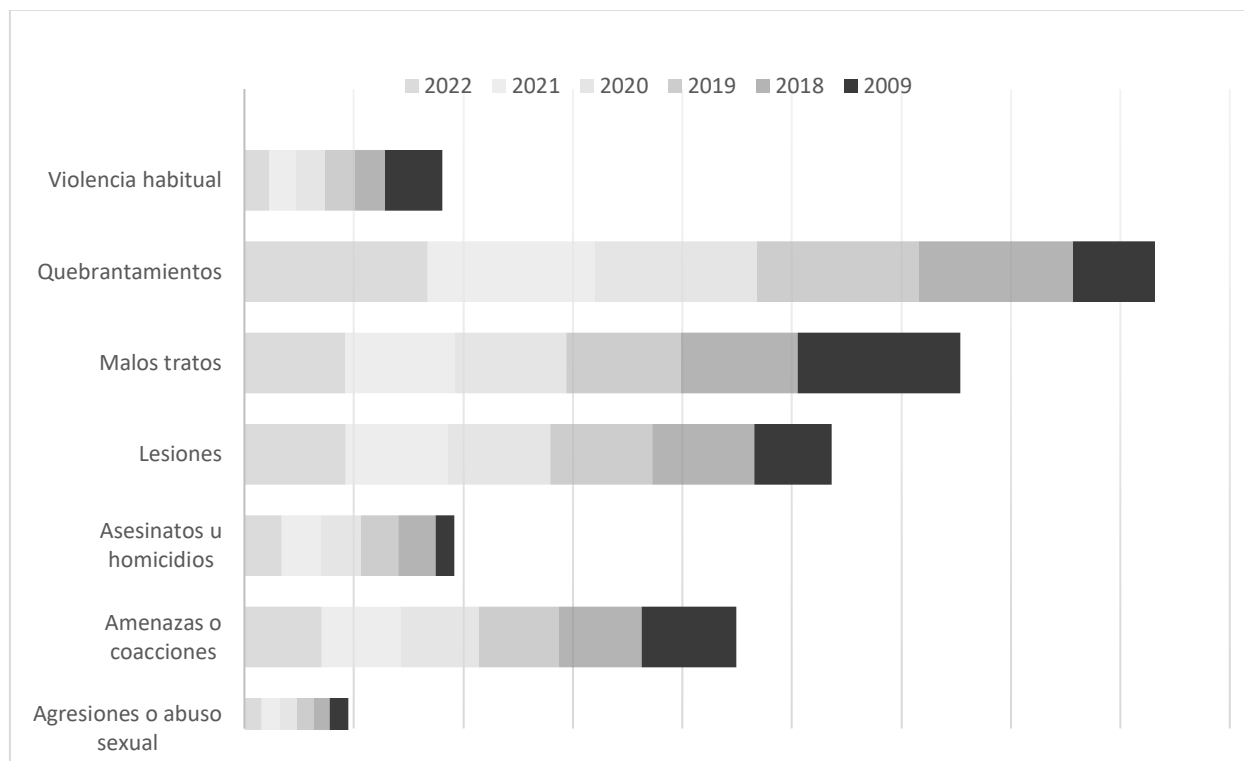


*Nota:* Grafico de elaboración propia extraído a partir de los datos del poder judicial de España

En España la prevalencia de hombres condenados por violencia de genero se mantiene a la alza (ver Figura 3) llegando a 44.218 hombres condenados en 2022. Los tipos de condena se mantienen relativamente estables en su distribución en los últimos cuatro años (ver Figura 4). En 2022, el 3,2% de los internos fueron condenados por agresiones o abusos sexuales, una proporción que se ha mantenido constante en comparación con años anteriores (entre 3% y 3,4%). A esta cifra le siguen los delitos por asesinatos u homicidios y la violencia habitual, que representaron el 6,8% y el 4,5% respectivamente, en 2022. Las amenazas o coacciones alcanzaron el 14,1%, mostrando una leve disminución respecto a 2021, seguido de las lesiones y los malos tratos, que fueron la causa del 18,5% y 18,4% de los delitos totales. Por último, el delito más común fue el quebrantamiento de penas o medidas de alejamiento, representando el 33,5% de los casos.

### Figura 4

Tipo de delito principal de las condenas por violencia de género en España en los últimos años



*Nota:* Gráfico de elaboración propia a partir de los datos del poder judicial de España.

#### 1.4. Marco normativo español

La transformación en España en lo referente a VGCP se consolida con la promulgación de la Ley Orgánica 1/2004, de 28 de diciembre, de Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género (LO 1/2004). El reconocimiento de la violencia de género como una violación de los derechos humanos fundamentales y un problema social de gran magnitud se reflejó inicialmente en la Constitución Española de 1978, que prohíbe expresamente la discriminación por razón de sexo (art. 14 CE). No obstante, el primer avance significativo en la legislación específica fue la Ley Orgánica 3/1989, que tipificó la violencia física habitual en el ámbito conyugal. No es hasta la Ley Orgánica 14/1999 cuando se introduce la tipificación de la violencia psíquica y se amplía la protección a las exparejas, marcando un avance crucial en la lucha contra la violencia de género.

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Sin embargo, el verdadero hito legislativo llegó con la LO 1/2004, que estableció un enfoque integral para la prevención, protección, intervención y sanción de la violencia de género.

La LO 1/2004 se destaca por su enfoque integral, abarcando diversas áreas de actuación:

1. **Derechos de las Víctimas:** Garantiza asistencia jurídica gratuita, derechos laborales y asistenciales específicos, y acceso a información sobre medidas de protección y seguridad.
2. **Tutela Penal y Judicial:** Incluye delitos de maltrato físico y psicológico, amenazas, coacciones y lesiones, con medidas como la suspensión de penas y la rehabilitación. Los Juzgados de Violencia sobre la Mujer y la Fiscalía de Violencia sobre la Mujer son instancias especializadas en la materia.
3. **Medidas de Sensibilización, Prevención y Detección:** Promueve la educación en valores de igualdad y respeto, regula la publicidad no discriminatoria, y fomenta la detección precoz en el ámbito sanitario.
4. **Tutela Institucional:** Crea la Delegación Especial del Gobierno contra la Violencia sobre la Mujer y el Observatorio Estatal de Violencia sobre la Mujer, además de unidades especializadas en las Fuerzas y Cuerpos de Seguridad del Estado.
5. **Medidas Judiciales de Protección y Seguridad:** Incluye órdenes de protección, protección de datos y limitación de la publicidad de las víctimas, así como medidas sobre la patria potestad y custodia de menores.

Desde la promulgación de la LO 1/2004, diversas reformas han adaptado la legislación a nuevos contextos y estándares internacionales. Años después, la Ley Orgánica 1/2015 incluye nuevos tipos penales relacionados con la violencia de género, como el acoso y el ciberacoso, y reconoce a los menores como víctimas directas de esta violencia.

La introducción de medidas específicas y la creación de marcos legales han buscado abordar este grave problema social desde múltiples ángulos, incluyendo el sistema de justicia, el tratamiento de los delincuentes, y la prevención y predicción de la violencia de género. La legislación española ha experimentado un punto de inflexión con la Ley Orgánica 1/2004, de

Medidas de Protección Integral contra la Violencia de Género, que marcó un hito en el reconocimiento legal del problema y estableció un marco jurídico específico para combatir la violencia de género (Maqueda Abreu, 2006). En el contexto de la rehabilitación de delincuentes, la legislación española, en consonancia con la Constitución Española, promueve la reeducación y reinserción social de los convictos (Constitución Española, art. 25.2; Ley Orgánica 1/1979; Real Decreto 190/1996). Este enfoque destaca la importancia de no solo castigar, sino también de tratar a los delincuentes para prevenir futuras reincidencias.

En línea con los principios establecidos en la Constitución y la Ley Orgánica 1/1979 de Legislación Penitenciaria, surge el Programa de Intervención para Agresores de Violencia de Género (PRIA) como una herramienta para ofrecer a los agresores la oportunidad de reflexionar sobre sus actos y aprender nuevas formas de relacionarse que rechacen la violencia. El PRIA-MA extiende la filosofía del PRIA a aquellos casos en los que se han impuesto medidas alternativas a la prisión. Este programa se dirige a agresores que no están cumpliendo condenas de cárcel, pero que están sujetos a otras formas de medidas judiciales, como la libertad vigilada. El objetivo sigue siendo la prevención de la violencia futura y la promoción de cambios positivos en el comportamiento y actitudes de los agresores.

### **1.5. Aproximación teórica: el modelo ecológico**

El modelo ecológico, originalmente propuesto por Bronfenbrenner (1977) y adaptado por Heise (1998) al estudio de la violencia de género, es uno de los enfoques más integradores y ampliamente respaldados para comprender este fenómeno. Este modelo estudia como la interacción entre factores individuales, relacionales, comunitarios y sociales, en conjunto, influyen en el inicio, la dinámica y las consecuencias de las conductas violentas en las relaciones de pareja. Al abordar la violencia desde múltiples niveles, el modelo ecológico permite una comprensión más profunda de las complejas dinámicas que la perpetúan y sugiere estrategias de intervención que aborden tanto las características personales como las estructuras sociales y culturales:

#### **1.5.1. Nivel individual (ontogénico)**

Este nivel se centra en las características personales que predisponen a una persona a perpetrar o ser víctima de violencia en pareja. En el caso de los agresores, factores como las experiencias tempranas adversas, el estilo de apego, las características psicopatológicas, el consumo de sustancias y la capacidad de regulación emocional emergen como elementos críticos. La evidencia sugiere que estos factores interactúan configurando patrones de relación disfuncionales que facilitan la aparición de conductas violentas en la adultez (Kim, 2023; Hardesty & Ogolsky, 2020).

### **1.5.2. Nivel relacional (microsistema)**

En este nivel, se analizan las dinámicas interpersonales y las características de las relaciones que pueden aumentar el riesgo de violencia. Entre ellos, las dificultades en la comunicación, los estilos de resolución de conflictos y las dinámicas de poder. Por ejemplo, las parejas en las que el agresor tiene un estilo de apego ansioso pueden experimentar ciclos de demanda-retirada, mientras que aquellos con apego evitativo tienden a mantener distancia emocional y conductas coercitivas (Finkel & Slotter 2007). Además, la calidad de las relaciones familiares y el apoyo social también desempeñan un papel importante, tanto desde el rol de agresor (Hoskins et al., 2020) como desde el rol de víctima (Jose & Novaco, 2016).

### **1.5.3. Nivel comunitario (exosistema)**

El contexto donde se desarrolla la relación, como el entorno socioeconómico y cultural, tiene un impacto significativo en las dinámicas de violencia. Factores como el desempleo, la inseguridad económica, la densidad poblacional y la falta de acceso a servicios de apoyo son aspectos que pueden influir en la aparición y perpetuación de la violencia. En particular, la falta de recursos comunitarios y la normalización de ciertas conductas violentas en el entorno inmediato pueden reforzar patrones de violencia en la pareja (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022).

#### **1.5.4. Nivel social (macrosistema)**

A nivel macro, el modelo ecológico resalta el papel de las normas culturales, las políticas públicas y las estructuras sociales en la perpetuación o inhibición de la violencia. La desigualdad de género, las normas patriarcales y la aceptación cultural de la violencia como forma de resolución de conflictos son factores que aumentan el riesgo de violencia de género. Asimismo, políticas inadecuadas o insuficientes para proteger a víctimas y responsabilizar a agresores también contribuyen al problema. El modelo destaca la necesidad de actuar sobre estas estructuras para reducir la violencia de forma sostenible (Di Napoli et al., 2019).

## Capítulo 2. Características psicológicas de los agresores de VGCP

Entendiendo la VGCP como un fenómeno de gran complejidad en el que se combinan una constelación de variables de distinta índole, este trabajo se centra en el estudio de un factor asociado a la agresión en los agresores: el estilo de apego.

La literatura científica ha mostrado de manera consistente que los hombres que ejercen esta violencia presentan déficits notables en ámbitos interpersonales, cognitivos y emocionales, diferenciándose así de los hombres que no recurren a la violencia en sus relaciones de pareja (Echeburúa et al., 2004; Redondo, et al., 2009; Graña & Redondo, 2010). Estas dificultades se pueden agrupar en tres categorías principales: factores cognitivos, contextuales-relacionales y psicopatológico-afectivos (Redondo, 2012).

### Tabla 2

*Características asociadas al agresor.*

<b>Factores cognitivos</b>	<b>Factores conductuales- relacionales</b>	<b>Factores psicopatológico- afectivos</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Atribución externa de responsabilidad</li> <li>• Minimización y normalización de la violencia</li> <li>• Actitudes y creencias tradicionales sobre la mujer y los roles de genero</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Deficiencia en habilidades de comunicación y resolución de conflictos</li> <li>• Discordia e insatisfacción conyugal</li> <li>• Necesidad de poder y control</li> <li>• Apoyo social</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emocionalidad negativa (ira, hostilidad, ansiedad, celos)</li> <li>• Psicopatología (síntomatología límite y antisocial, depresión)</li> <li>• Estilo de apego inseguro</li> </ul>

- 
- |   |  |
|---|--|
| • Transmisión intergeneracional de la violencia | • Baja autoestima, dependencia emocional |
|---|--|
- 

## 2.1. Características de tipo cognitivo

En el ámbito cognitivo, la tendencia de los hombres violentos a minimizar o negar las consecuencias de sus acciones violentas es particularmente frecuente y preocupante, tiene que ver con negar los hechos o minimizar los mismos (Heckert y Gondolf, 2000). Esta actitud se acompaña frecuentemente de una atribución de responsabilidad de sus actos a factores externos o directamente a la víctima (Edkhardt y Dye, 2000), estos esquemas cognitivos y actitudes minimizan el sentido de culpabilidad o necesidad de cambio en el agresor ya que se relaciona la falta de responsabilidad con los hechos con la motivación al cambio en programas de intervención y tratamiento (Daly y Pelowski, 2000).

Parece que la responsabilidad sobre la violencia se ve influenciada por las creencias sexistas de los agresores, las cuales dificultan el reconocimiento de la misma (García-Díaz et al. 2018). Glick & Fiske (1996; 2012, p. 70) definieron dos tipos de sexismo: el sexismo hostil, que engloba actitudes despectivas sobre las mujeres, con un tinte de inferioridad y sospechas generales de que las mujeres son controladoras; y el sexismo benevolente, que describe a las mujeres como criaturas débiles que han de ser protegidas, apoyadas y adoradas, y que, por ende, necesitan un hombre. En este aspecto, parece que es el sexismo hostil es el que guarda relación con la VGCP (Allen et al. 2009) y no tanto el benevolente, que por su idiosincrasia es consistente con la protección hacia las mujeres, siempre y cuando no desafíen la autoridad del marido o violen los roles de género (Glick et al. 2002).

## **2.2. Características de tipo contextual-relacional**

En cuanto a los factores contextuales-relacionales, los hombres que mantienen comportamientos violentos con su pareja a menudo experimentan un patrón disfuncional de comunicación que puede conducir a potenciales escaladas de violencia (Dutton y Strachan, 1987; Love et al., 2020). Esta deficiencia en habilidades de comunicación y resolución de conflictos, crucial para expresar necesidades y sentimientos y rechazar peticiones de manera saludable, se encuentra comprometida en los agresores de pareja (Schumacher et al., 2001) y a menudo se trabaja en los programas de reinserción y/o tratamiento con estos hombres (Arce y Fariña, 2010; Echeburúa et al. 2009; Echeburúa y Fernández Montalvo, 2009; Graña et al. 2008; Lila et al., 2010). Desde un paradigma de interacción con la pareja, las parejas que presentan más conductas ofensivas y comunicación negativa durante discusiones interactúan en un ciclo de reciprocidad negativa, especialmente cuando el hombre es el agresor (Berns et al. 1999; Jacobson et al. 1994).

Dos de las variables de riesgo relacional más frecuentemente estudiadas en la violencia en la pareja han sido los niveles de discordia y satisfacción conyugal (Saunders, 1995). Las investigaciones han mostrado una relación entre el aumento del conflicto marital y la agresión física y entre la disminución de la satisfacción marital y la agresión física en las relaciones íntimas (Stith et al. 2004; 2008). La satisfacción conyugal está inversamente relacionada con el conflicto en la pareja, a mayor conflicto menor satisfacción (DeMaris, 2000; Gottman, 1994). Parece que el uso de la violencia en la pareja por parte de los hombres tiene que ver con que lo consideran una manera efectiva de mantener el control durante un conflicto (O`Keefe, 1997) o por la propia incapacidad de gestionar eficazmente el conflicto en respuesta a una situación específica, sin la necesidad de controlar (Johnson y Ferraro 2000). Esta situación puede generar un círculo complejo de deterioro de la satisfacción con la relación y malestar con la relación, posibilitando un entorno propicio para que se mantenga de la agresión (Stith et al., 2008).

El apoyo social, aunque poco estudiado, también tiene un importante impacto en la dinámica de la violencia en la pareja. Por un lado, la falta de redes de apoyo positivas puede aumentar las dificultades emocionales de los agresores, como la baja autoestima y la sintomatología

depresiva, lo que a su vez influye en la culpabilización de la víctima y perpetúa el comportamiento violento (Lila et al., 2013). Por otro lado, las redes sociales que incluyen antecedentes de violencia en sus miembros están asociadas con mayores niveles de violencia de pareja, destacando el rol de la calidad de estas redes en la perpetuación o mitigación de la violencia (Hoskins & Kunkel, 2020). Además, la exposición a violencia comunitaria y el estrés asociado con eventos adversos están vinculados con patrones violentos en agresores, especialmente cuando estas experiencias no se contrarrestan con redes de apoyo sólidas y funcionales (Raghavan et al., 2009)

La transmisión intergeneracional de la violencia, que parte del modelo de aprendizaje social de Bandura (1986) se refiere como se transmiten modelos de comportamiento violento de una generación a otra, a través de la socialización familiar y el aprendizaje vicario. Es decir, los hijos e hijas de padres violentos tienden a reproducir en sus propias relaciones lo que han observado o experimentado en su familia de origen. Esta hipótesis ha sido respaldada por numerosos estudios que han encontrado una asociación positiva entre haber presenciado o sufrido violencia en la infancia y ser violento o violentada en la edad adulta (Kimber et al. 2018). En un estudio prospectivo, Linder y Collins (2005) encontraron que las personas que sufrieron maltrato en la primera infancia, presenciaron violencia sexual parental o experimentaron difusión de límites con sus progenitores, como la parentificación, reportaron niveles más altos de agresión hacia su pareja en la adultez. Esto es consistente con investigaciones recientes (Haj-Yahia et al., 2021), que indican que la agresión física de padre a hijo está particularmente vinculada con la perpetración de violencia en la pareja en la adultez, especialmente en hombres (Herrenkohl et al., 2004; Kaufman-Parks et al., 2018). Asimismo, si bien la exposición a la violencia familiar en la infancia no es un factor necesario para la agresión en la pareja, los resultados sugieren que los agresores con antecedentes de violencia familiar apoyan con más fuerza las actitudes sexistas y creencias negativas sobre las mujeres (Lee et al., 2013). El abuso infantil no solo tiene consecuencias discapacitantes, sino que también se asocia con formas múltiples y acumulativas de trauma (Shields et al., 2020). De la misma manera que ocurre con otras variables de riesgo tempranas, los efectos de la exposición infantil a la violencia parecen estar mediados por otras variables que se dan en el posterior en el desarrollo (White y Widom, 2003). Por ejemplo, la desregulación de la ira se ha identificado como

un factor clave que media en la relación entre el maltrato físico infantil con la violencia de pareja en la adultez (Iverson et al., 2014).

### **2.3. Características de tipo psicopatológico-afectivo**

Anderson y Bussman (2002) presentaron un modelo general sobre la agresión interpersonal en el que proponen una relación moderada entre la activación de la ira y el comportamiento agresivo. Varios modelos teóricos sobre la etiología de la VGCP indican que la ira y, en general, el aumento de la emocionalidad negativa pueden funcionar como factores de riesgo para la agresión (Finkel, 2007; O'Leary, 1988). La emocionalidad negativa se entiende como una predisposición estable a experimentar emociones negativas intensas, como la ira, la ansiedad y la hostilidad, caracterizada por una reacción exacerbada ante el estrés y el conflicto, así como pensamientos de desconfianza y dificultad para regular las emociones. Además, muchas intervenciones psicológicas con agresores de pareja a menudo incluyen el control de las emociones como una técnica para promover el cambio no violento (Graña et al. 2008; Lila et al. 2010; Murphy y Eckhardt, 2005).

La emoción de la ira puede definirse como un constructo complejo que abarca dimensiones fisiológicas, cognitivas, emocionales y conductuales (Berkowitz, 1993; Eckhardt et al., 1997; Eckhardt y Deffenbacher, 1995). Diversos estudios han identificado la ira y la hostilidad como factores de riesgo relevantes para la violencia en las relaciones de pareja. Estos hallazgos sugieren que las personas con características agresivas presentan una mayor tendencia a experimentar reacciones de ira de forma intensa y frecuente. Este vínculo, representado con frecuencia en los medios de comunicación, puede influir en la percepción social de la violencia de género en contextos de pareja, reforzando la asociación entre la agresión y las respuestas de ira. No obstante, desde hace décadas, los expertos han advertido sobre la importancia de no centrarse exclusivamente en la ira para explicar la agresión. Señalan la relevancia de considerar otras variables que influyen en el comportamiento agresivo (Pence y Paymar, 1993; Tolman y Saunders, 1988). De hecho, no existe suficiente respaldo teórico para abordar la ira como el único factor en el desarrollo de conductas agresivas (Birkley y Eckhardt, 2015).

Los resultados de dos metanálisis indican que existe una asociación moderada entre la ira, la hostilidad, la internalización de emociones negativas (como la ansiedad, la depresión y el resentimiento) y la agresión (Birkley y Eckhardt, 2015; Norlander y Eckhardt, 2005). La ira y la hostilidad suelen estudiarse en conjunto con características de personalidad antisocial, ya que estas variables parecen estar interrelacionadas en el contexto de la agresión (Capaldi et al., 2012; White y Widom, 2003). En este sentido, se ha identificado que la presencia de comportamientos antisociales en la infancia constituye uno de los predictores más sólidos de la violencia en las relaciones de pareja en la adultez (Capaldi et al., 2012).

Por otro lado, altos niveles de emocionalidad negativa (como ira, hostilidad y ansiedad) en interacción con niveles altos de neuroticismo se han relacionado con tasas más altas de violencia en la pareja (Hellmunt y McNulty, 2008). Dutton (1998, 2010) propone un modelo en el que expone cómo el desarrollo de un patrón de inestabilidad afectiva, vinculado a un estilo de apego inseguro, puede llevar a la formación de una personalidad de tipo límite. Este modelo sugiere que las personas con apego inseguro son más propensas a experimentar fluctuaciones emocionales intensas y comportamientos impulsivos, características típicas de la personalidad límite.

El trastorno de personalidad antisocial (TAP) se han estudiado ampliamente en relación con la agresión en la pareja (Brem et al., 2018; Capaldi et al., 2012; Fernández-Suárez et al., 2018). De hecho, se ha identificado un tipo específico de agresor de VGCP, que se caracteriza por presentar un historial delictivo extenso y ejercer violencia tanto dentro como fuera del ámbito de la pareja (Gondolf, 1988; Herrero et al. 2016; Holtzworth-Munroe y Stuart, 1994). Los maltratadores con trastorno antisocial de la personalidad suelen haber estado expuestos a la violencia durante la infancia, mantienen actitudes rígidas y tradicionales hacia los roles de género y tienen una mayor probabilidad de haber sido detenidos en comparación con otros tipos de agresores (Holtzworth-Munroe y Stuart, 1994).

A raíz del trabajo de Dutton (1998), son muchos los estudios que han estudiado la asociación entre el Trastorno Límite de la Personalidad (TLP) y la violencia de pareja, ya sea física, sexual o psicológica (Armenti et al., 2018; Armenti y Babcock, 2021; Gonzalez et al., 2016; Munro y Shellbom, 2020; Stepp et al., 2012). Dutton en su modelo sobre la personalidad de los agresores

de VGCP, la describió como una personalidad esencialmente límite, caracterizada por niveles elevados y crónicos de trauma. Según su planteamiento, estos sujetos presentan una sensibilidad intensificada ante la percepción de amenaza y celos, lo que los lleva a reaccionar con ira y a adoptar actitudes de control para enmascarar dichas emociones.

En esta línea, una de las tipologías más consolidadas (Holtzworth-Munroe y Stuart, 1994) está representada principalmente por un grupo de agresores que se caracteriza por presentar la psicopatología más grave (en ansiedad y depresión), siendo además el más propenso a experimentar problemas interpersonales, miedo al rechazo y una marcada labilidad emocional. De hecho, el trastorno límite de la personalidad (TLP) se ha asociado a la perpetración de violencia en la pareja, manifestándose en formas de agresión tanto psicológica como física. Los rasgos característicos del TLP se vinculan con una frecuencia elevada de conductas violentas que varían en intensidad, desde episodios ocasionales hasta formas repetitivas que pueden causar lesiones (González et al., 2016). Asimismo, la presencia de rasgos de personalidad límite y antisocial en agresores de VGCP se ha relacionado con déficits en habilidades empáticas y un mayor riesgo de reincidencia (Romero-Martínez et al., 2016).

La presencia de síntomas depresivos ha sido identificada como un posible factor de riesgo para ejercer violencia en la pareja (Capaldi et al., 2012; Schumacher et al., 2001). En particular, se ha observado que la depresión en hombres se vincula a comportamientos de agresión, tanto física como psicológica, hacia sus parejas (Capaldi y Crosby, 1997; Kim y Capaldi, 2004). Si bien algunos estudios no han encontrado una relación directa entre síntomas depresivos y la violencia de género en parejas jóvenes (Andrews et al., 2000), esta sintomatología parece ser más prevalente entre agresores adultos de mayor edad (Cheng y Jaffe, 2021; Roma et al., 2012). La mayor prevalencia de síntomas depresivos en estos agresores adultos podría estar relacionada con experiencias traumáticas en la infancia, como abuso o exposición a la violencia doméstica, características comunes en la tipología de agresores disfóricos (Cheng y Jaffe, 2021).

## 2.4. Resumen del capítulo

La evidencia científica destaca que los agresores de VGCP suelen presentar características concretas que se pueden dividir en tres áreas principales: la cognitiva, la contextual-relacional y la psicopatológica-afectiva:

- 1. Factores Cognitivos:** Los agresores tienden a minimizar y justificar sus acciones, atribuyendo la responsabilidad de la violencia a factores externos o a la propia víctima. Este proceso de racionalización y minimización de la violencia se refuerza con creencias sexistas, que justifican la dominación y el control sobre la pareja. La presencia de estos esquemas cognitivos dificulta la autocrítica y limita la disposición para el cambio
- 2. Factores Contextuales-Relacionales:** Las habilidades de comunicación y resolución de conflictos de los agresores pueden ser deficientes, lo cual favorece interacciones conflictivas y potenciales escaladas de violencia. En este contexto, la discordia en la relación y la insatisfacción con la pareja se han relacionado con el aumento de la violencia dentro de la misma. Además, la transmisión intergeneracional de la violencia y la falta de apoyo social también han sido identificadas como variables de riesgo.
- 3. Factores Psicopatológico-Afectivos:** Las emociones negativas, como la ira y la hostilidad, junto con ciertos rasgos psicopatológicos, incluyendo el trastorno límite de la personalidad (TLP) y el trastorno antisocial de la personalidad (TAP), se identifican como variables de riesgo para la violencia en pareja. En particular, el TLP se asocia con inestabilidad afectiva y respuestas intensas ante situaciones de amenaza, mientras que el TAP se relaciona con impulsividad y conductas delictivas. Asimismo, la depresión aparece vinculada a comportamientos violentos, especialmente en agresores de mayor edad.

Los agresores de VGCP presentan un perfil psicológico complejo caracterizado por una combinación de distorsiones cognitivas, dificultades en las relaciones interpersonales y una alta

intensidad y desregulación de afectos negativos. La interacción de estos factores puede contribuir a una mayor predisposición hacia el uso de la violencia.

### Capítulo 3: El estilo de apego en agresores de VGCP

Irónicamente, la violencia suele manifestarse con mayor frecuencia en las relaciones más cercanas y emocionalmente significativas (Meloy, 2003). En el estudio de la violencia interpersonal, y específicamente en el ámbito de las relaciones íntimas, se ha prestado especial atención al estilo de apego. Los estilos de apego influyen en la capacidad de una persona para reconocer, procesar, regular y manejar sus emociones (Johnson y Whiffen, 1999; Mikulincer et al., 2003; Stevens, 2014). Aunque son relativamente estables y los primeros vínculos son importantes, estos lazos evolucionan a lo largo de la vida, moldeados por nuevas relaciones y experiencias posteriores, sin quedar determinados exclusivamente por la experiencia familiar temprana (Ainsworth, 1979; Feeney y Noller, 1996). Estos vínculos iniciales dan forma a un sistema de creencias sobre uno mismo y los demás, conocidos como modelos operativos internos. Estos modelos guían la manera en que nos relacionamos y percibimos a las personas, basándose en experiencias previas, lo que genera tanto una autoimagen como una percepción de los otros que puede ser positiva o negativa (Bartholomew, 1990; Bretherton, 1985; Melero y Cantero, 2008).

Inspirados en la conexión entre el apego infantil y las relaciones afectivas en la vida adulta, Shaver y Hazan (1988) identificaron tres categorías de apego en adultos: seguro, evitativo y ansioso-ambivalente. Posteriormente, Bartholomew (1990) y Bartholomew y Horowitz (1991) ampliaron este modelo, proponiendo cuatro tipos de apego en adultos: seguro, preocupado, despectivo y temeroso. Estos prototipos se configuran a partir de la combinación de dos dimensiones fundamentales: ansiedad y evitación (ver Figura 5). La dimensión de ansiedad está relacionada con los esquemas que el individuo tiene sobre sí mismo y su grado de preocupación o seguridad en las relaciones. Presenta dos polos opuestos: una ansiedad elevada indica una preocupación excesiva por la estabilidad de los vínculos, mientras que una ansiedad baja refleja una mayor sensación de seguridad. Por su parte, la dimensión de evitación se asocia con las creencias que el individuo tiene sobre los demás, y mide la tendencia a buscar o evitar la cercanía emocional. Una evitación alta implica una desconexión en las relaciones, mientras que una evitación baja denota una mayor apertura y comodidad en la proximidad emocional (Yárnoz-Yaben, 2008).

El estilo de apego, concretamente el inseguro, se ha relacionado con un aumento del riesgo de VGCP en la edad adulta (Capaldi et al. 2012; Schumacher et al., 2001). En un estudio realizado en una muestra comunitaria (Spencer et al., 2021), se examinaron los vínculos entre los estilos de apego y la agresión física en la pareja. Los resultados mostraron que los hombres que tienen estilos de apego ansiosos, evitativos o desorganizados presentan más tendencia a la agresión en comparación con aquellos que tienen estilos de apego más seguros. Esto significa que los hombres que se preocupan excesivamente por el abandono y necesitan una gran cercanía emocional, como aquellos con apego ansioso o preocupado, muestran una fuerte asociación positiva con las agresiones en sus relaciones. De manera similar, aquellos que tienden a evitar la intimidad emocional y prefieren mantener cierta independencia, es decir, con un estilo de apego evitativo, también presentan una asociación positiva y significativa con conductas agresivas en sus relaciones de pareja. Además, los hombres con apego desorganizado, caracterizado por una incoherencia en sus respuestas emocionales, muestran un patrón similar. Sin embargo, los resultados relacionados con el apego desorganizado no fueron lo suficientemente robustos como para rechazar la existencia de sesgo de publicación, es decir, la tendencia a publicar solo aquellos estudios con hallazgos significativos, dejando fuera estudios con resultados menos concluyentes. Por otro lado, el apego seguro se relacionó negativamente tanto con la agresión como con la victimización en las relaciones.

En otro metanálisis (Velotti, 2021), realizado con muestras comunitarias, se investigaron los tipos de violencia y su relación con los estilos de apego evitativo y ansioso. Los investigadores encontraron una relación entre ambos estilos de apego y la agresión en VGCP, aunque con ciertos matices. Específicamente, hallaron una relación positiva entre el apego ansioso y la violencia genérica en pareja —definida como la violencia en relaciones íntimas sin distinción de manifestaciones (física, psicológica o sexual)— con un tamaño de efecto promedio significativo ( $r = 0.28$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). Además, el apego ansioso mostró una asociación significativa con la violencia física ( $r = 0.19$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), psicológica ( $r = 0.30$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) y sexual ( $r = 0.35$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Por otro lado, el apego evitativo también se asoció positivamente con la perpetración de violencia íntima, aunque en menor grado. La relación entre el apego evitativo y la violencia en general no fue

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significativa ( $r = 0.07$ ,  $p = 0.61$ ), pero sí se encontró una correlación significativa con la violencia física ( $r = 0.12$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ), psicológica ( $r = 0.14$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ) y sexual ( $r = 0.20$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ). Sin embargo, se observó que la calidad de los estudios influía en la magnitud de la asociación entre el apego evitativo y la violencia psicológica, mostrando un efecto mayor en los estudios de menor rigor metodológico. Los autores sugieren que los individuos con un estilo de apego evitativo tienden a exhibir comportamientos distantes e insensibles y utilizan estrategias para controlar la expresión de la ira. No obstante, cuando estas estrategias fallan, pueden desencadenarse episodios de violencia.

En cuanto al estilo de apego seguro, se ha observado una asociación entre este estilo y la capacidad para identificar las propias emociones de angustia, así como para gestionar el malestar emocional mediante cercanía y confianza hacia los demás (Johnson y Whiffen, 1999; Mikulincer et al., 2003). Sin embargo, algunos estudios sugieren que, en situaciones de estrés, incluso los agresores con un estilo de apego seguro y antecedentes de trauma pueden mostrar un incremento en la violencia hacia su pareja (Gottlieb y Schmitt, 2022).

Desde un enfoque de dinámica de interacción en la relación, las parejas con diferentes estilos de apego pueden experimentar conflictos debido a la forma en que responden a las amenazas relacionales. Dutton (2011) sugiere que los desacuerdos sobre la cercanía y la distancia emocional (teorizadas por Pistole, 1994) preceden a la violencia. Si uno de los miembros de la pareja experimenta una alta ansiedad de apego y el otro muestra una marcada evitación, las respuestas de uno pueden, de manera involuntaria, activar el sistema de apego del otro, lo que puede provocar una escalada en los conflictos relacionales. Este ciclo es un ejemplo del fenómeno de demanda-retirada (Finkel, 2007), en el que la persona ansiosa exige mayor proximidad o resolución del conflicto, mientras que la otra, con un estilo evitativo, responde alejándose emocionalmente. Estos desacuerdos sobre la cercanía y la distancia emocional son comunes en estas parejas, ya que cada miembro tiene necesidades y expectativas distintas respecto al manejo de la intimidad. Finkel (2007) argumenta que estos patrones de interacción diádica, como la retirada (evitación) frente a las demandas del miembro ansioso, juegan un papel crucial en la forma en que las parejas manejan la violencia durante los conflictos.

## Figura 5

*Estilos de apego en base a las dimensiones de ansiedad y evitación y características de la agresión*



*Nota: Gráfico de elaboración propia*

Es ampliamente conocido el trabajo de Holtzworth-Munroe y Stuart (1994), quienes definieron tres tipologías en base a las siguientes dimensiones: gravedad de la violencia, generalización de la violencia y psicopatología del agresor. En primer lugar, se encontraban los maltratadores que muestran violencia limitada al ámbito de la familia y por tanto menos propensos a participar en actos violentos fuera de este entorno. Tienen menos tendencia a agredir sexual y psicológicamente, de forma menos severa y presentan poca o ninguna psicopatología o trastorno de personalidad. En segundo lugar, se encuentran los maltratadores disfóricos o límites, quienes exhiben un nivel moderado o severo de agresión hacia su pareja, tanto física, sexual como psicológica. Estas agresiones suelen estar circunscritas al ámbito familiar, aunque en ocasiones pueden manifestar violencia en otros entornos. Estos hombres tienden a presentar disforia, rasgos limítrofes y esquizoides, inestabilidad emocional, así como consumo de alcohol y otras sustancias. Por último, los generalmente violentos o antisociales, agreden de forma moderada y severa tanto en la pareja (física, sexual y psicológicamente) como en otros entornos, muestran un historial delictivo extenso y son propensos a tener problemas de consumo de drogas y además de caracterizarse por la presencia de trastornos de personalidad o psicopatía.

A raíz del trabajo de Holtzworth-Munroe y Stuart (1994), surgieron otros trabajos que se han centrado en ajustar tipologías de maltratadores de VGCP teniendo en cuenta el perfil de apego. Waltz et al. (2000) identificaron tres grupos de agresores: generales, patológicos y los que ejercen violencia solo en el ámbito familiar. Los resultados mostraron que los agresores generalmente violentos presentan patrones de evitación emocional más marcados y niveles más bajos de ansiedad en comparación con los agresores patológicos, quienes se caracterizan por una mayor dependencia emocional y una tendencia a la retirada acompañada de enfado. En este estudio, los agresores en el ámbito familiar se diferenciaban de los hombres no violentos principalmente por mostrar altos niveles de necesidad de atención. Además, otros estudios han encontrado que los niveles de ansiedad y evitación en el apego varían según la tipología de agresores: los agresores con rasgos patológicos muestran altos niveles de ansiedad y bajos niveles de evitación, mientras que los agresores en el ámbito familiar presentan resultados similares a los del grupo de control. (Chiffriller y Hennessy, 2009). Por otro lado, enfoques como el de Tweed y Dutton (1998) han identificado categorías basadas en características de personalidad, diferenciando entre agresores instrumentales e impulsivos. Estos grupos también muestran diferencias en los estilos de apego, asociando la violencia instrumental con un apego preocupado y la violencia impulsiva con un apego temeroso.

### **3.1. Resumen del capítulo**

**Apego inseguro y agresión en la pareja:** Los estilos de apego inseguros, como el ansioso, el evitativo y el desorganizado, incrementan la predisposición a la violencia en las relaciones de pareja. Estos estilos se caracterizan por una gestión emocional deficiente y dificultades en la resolución de conflictos, lo que puede derivar en comportamientos agresivos.

**Apego ansioso:** El apego ansioso, caracterizado por una necesidad constante de cercanía y un intenso temor al abandono, suele asociarse con una alta reactividad emocional ante situaciones de inseguridad o posibles amenazas a la relación. Estas características pueden favorecer la aparición de conductas violentas en situaciones percibidas como amenazas a la relación.

**Apego evitativo:** En el caso del apego evitativo, la tendencia a desconectarse emocionalmente y a controlar de manera rígida la expresión de sus emociones actúa como mecanismo de defensa. Sin embargo, el fallo de este hipercontrol puede desencadenar respuestas violentas en contextos de alta tensión.

**Apego seguro:** A diferencia de los estilos inseguros, el apego seguro actúa como un factor de protección en las relaciones, y se asocia con una regulación emocional más estable y una mayor capacidad para gestionar conflictos de manera constructiva. No obstante, en personas con antecedentes de trauma, historia de relaciones conflictivas o dificultades en la regulación del estrés, aquellos con apego seguro pueden llegar a exhibir comportamientos violentos en situaciones de alta tensión

## **Capítulo 4. Objetivos de la tesis**

### **4.1 Objetivo general**

El objetivo general de esta tesis es evaluar el papel del estilo de apego en hombres condenados por violencia de género, analizando su influencia en las conductas agresivas, su distribución en relación con otras variables psicológicas y antecedentes personales, y su conexión con distintos tipos de agresión y tipologías de agresores.

### **4.2 Objetivos específicos**

- Examinar la relación entre los estilos de apego inseguro y los distintos tipos de violencia en hombres que han ejercido violencia contra su pareja.
- Evaluar la validez del Cuestionario de Apego Adulto (CAA) en una muestra de hombres condenados por violencia contra la pareja en España.
- Investigar la capacidad predictiva de los estilos de apego inseguro (preocupado, evitativo y temeroso) y las experiencias de abuso por parte del padre y/o madre en la manifestación de agresión.
- Desarrollar una clasificación de hombres condenados por violencia de género en España, integrando el estilo de apego como un eje central junto con otras dimensiones, como la intensidad y tipo de agresión cometida, antecedentes de violencia, actitudes hacia el uso de la violencia y características psicopatológicas.

## **Capítulo 5. Metodología**

### **5.1. Participantes**

En los estudios que componen este trabajo participaron un total de 419 hombres condenados por un delito de violencia de género, quienes cumplían una pena de prisión efectiva o tenían la condena suspendida bajo la condición de participar en un programa de tratamiento psicológico como medida penal alternativa orientada a la reeducación, conforme al Artículo 35 de la Sección IV de la Ley Orgánica 2004 sobre Violencia de Género en España. Los criterios de inclusión se limitaron a hombres heterosexuales que cumplían estas condiciones. Se excluyeron del estudio a menores de edad, personas con consumo problemático de alcohol o drogas, individuos con síntomas psicóticos y aquellos que no comprendían el español, idioma en el que se desarrolló el protocolo de evaluación.

### **5.2. Diseño y procedimiento**

Este estudio forma parte de un proyecto que se ejecutó entre 2020 y 2023 y que se circunscribe en torno a una financiación de Doctorado Industrial de la Comunidad de Madrid (ref. IND2020/SOC-17490). El diseño y protocolo de investigación empleado en este trabajo ha sido utilizado en estudios previos desde 2005 bajo la dirección de José Luis Graña Gómez, quien ha liderado esta línea de investigación durante años. Esta tesis se integra dentro de este marco de investigación.

Siguiendo una orden judicial, los participantes asignados a los Centros de Inserción Social (CIS) Victoria Kent, Josefina Aldecoa y el CIS de Jaen fueron citados para una entrevista individual, en la que los profesionales evaluaron los criterios de inclusión y asignaron a los participantes a un grupo de tratamiento según el horario. Por su parte, en los centros penitenciarios Madrid II y Madrid IV, la asignación a los grupos de tratamiento se llevó a cabo directamente por parte de los psicólogos en estos establecimientos.

Los datos se obtuvieron a través de un protocolo de evaluación en español, aplicado durante la primera sesión del programa de tratamiento, la cual tuvo una duración aproximada de 3 horas. Antes de completar el protocolo, los participantes recibieron información sobre los objetivos del estudio y su participación en el mismo. Se les proporcionaron instrucciones claras sobre cómo completar los cuestionarios, siguiendo las consideraciones éticas sobre la participación en investigaciones propuestas por la APA (Asociación Americana de Psicología) en “Los principios éticos de los psicólogos y el código de conducta”, los Principios Éticos para la Investigación en Humanos de la Declaración de Helsinki, y los Principios del Código Deontológico del Psicólogo (sección IV) del Consejo General de la Psicología en España. Todos los participantes firmaron voluntariamente y de manera altruista el formulario de consentimiento informado para participar en esta investigación.

El enfoque de muestreo fue no probabilístico y de conveniencia, y el diseño del estudio fue observacional, analítico y transversal. Para llevar a cabo este estudio, se obtuvieron informes favorables del comité deontológico de la Facultad de Psicología de la Universidad Complutense de Madrid (7 de junio del 2021) y la autorización de la Secretaría General de Instituciones Penitenciarias del Gobierno de España antes de iniciar la investigación (20 de diciembre del 2021).

### **5.3. Instrumentos**

#### **5.3.1. Cuestionario sociodemográfico (Graña et al. 2014)**

Se incluyeron diversos ítems para evaluar las características sociodemográficas de los participantes: edad, estado civil, nacionalidad y actividad profesional. Además de recabar otra información acerca del historial delictivo, la percepción de abuso durante la infancia por parte de los padres y otros cuidadores, así como experiencias y observaciones de violencia del padre hacia la madre.

#### **5.3.2. Escala de Tácticas de Conflicto Revisada (Conflict Tactics Scale, Revised, CTS2; Straus et al., 1996).**

Esta escala evalúa la frecuencia con la que se utilizan la agresión psicológica y física, así como las estrategias de negociación en las relaciones de pareja. Sus propiedades psicométricas fueron revisadas en la población de agresores (Loinaz et al., 2012). La escala está compuesta por 78 ítems (39 para cada miembro de la pareja) y utiliza un formato tipo Likert de 7 puntos, donde 0 representa "nunca" y 6 indica "más de 20 veces". Permite obtener puntuaciones en una escala de razón. La escala incluye 10 subescalas, de las cuales 6 fueron empleadas en este estudio.

### **5.3.3. Cuestionario de Agresión (AQ; Buss & Perry, 1992, adaptación española de Rodríguez, Peña y Graña, 2002).**

Esta escala consta de 29 ítems que evalúan comportamientos y sentimientos agresivos. Los ítems se responden en una escala tipo Likert con cinco opciones de respuesta, que van desde "completamente falso para mí" hasta "completamente verdadero para mí". Consta de una dimensión global y 4 subdimensiones: agresividad física, verbal, irascibilidad y hostilidad.

### **5.3.4. Cuestionario de apego adulto (CAA; Melero & Cantero, 2008)**

El Cuestionario de Apego Adulto de Melero y Cantero consta de 40 ítems en una escala tipo Likert (1-6). Evalúa diferentes dimensiones del apego en adultos. Sus ítems forman parte de una estructura latente de 4 factores que, agrupados, dan lugar a los estilos de apego teorizados, tanto bidimensionales (seguro e inseguro) como categóricos (seguro, preocupado, temeroso-hostil, evitativo). Las cuatro dimensiones del cuestionario son: Baja autoestima, necesidad de aprobación y miedo al rechazo, Resolución hostil de conflictos, resentimiento y posesividad, Expresión de sentimientos y comodidad con las relaciones: Autosuficiencia emocional y malestar con la intimidad.

### **5.3.5. Inventario de Expresión de Ira Estado-Rasgo (STAXI-2; Spielberger, 1988, adaptación española de Miguel-Tobal et al., 2001).**

Este inventario evalúa la ira rasgo a través de dos subescalas (temperamento iracundo y reacción de ira) y la ira estado mediante tres subescalas (sentimiento, expresión física y expresión verbal). Además, permite obtener un índice de expresión de la ira a través de cuatro subescalas: expresión externa de la ira, expresión interna de la ira, control externo de la ira y control interno de la ira. Consta de 49 ítems que se responden en una escala de 4 puntos, con opciones que incluyen “no”, “en absoluto”, “un poco”, “moderadamente” y “mucho”.

### **5.3.6. Evaluación Autoinformada de los Trastornos de Personalidad según el DSM-IV R (SCID-II; First et al., 1999).**

Consta de 119 ítems que reflejan la presencia o ausencia de diferentes trastornos de la personalidad. En este estudio, se utilizaron los 30 ítems que evalúan la presencia de trastorno límite de la personalidad (TLP) o trastorno de personalidad antisocial (TAP). Los ítems ofrecen 3 opciones de respuesta: "nunca", "a veces" y "siempre o casi siempre".

### **5.3.7. Escala de impulsividad de Plutchik (EI-Is; Plutchik & Van Praag, 1989)**

Está compuesta por 15 ítems con cuatro opciones de respuesta (nunca, a veces, a menudo y casi siempre), que evalúan la tendencia a actuar de manera impulsiva a través de sus cuatro subescalas: capacidad de planificación, control de estados emocionales, control de comportamientos como la alimentación, el gasto de dinero o las relaciones sexuales, y control de otros comportamientos.

### **5.3.8. Inventario Breve de Síntomas (BSI; Derogatis & Melisaratos, 1983)**

Es un inventario dimensional adaptado al español por Aragón et al. (2000) que evalúa la sintomatología en nueve escalas, de las cuales dos fueron utilizadas en este estudio: ansiedad y depresión. La escala completa consta de 53 ítems con opciones de respuesta tipo Likert que van de 0 a 4.

### **5.3.9. Inventario de Pensamientos Distorsionados sobre la Mujer y el Uso de la Violencia Revisado (IPDMUV-R; Echeburúa et al. 2016).**

Es un instrumento que evalúa los sesgos cognitivos contra la pareja que presentan los hombres violentos. La versión empleada deriva del IPDMUV (Fernández-Montalvo y Echeburúa, 1997). Consta de 21 ítems binarios que forman una única escala que permite identificar creencias irracionales en el agresor relacionadas con los roles de género y la supuesta inferioridad de la mujer respecto al hombre, así como el uso de la violencia como forma aceptable de resolver conflictos.

### **5.3.10. Escala de Tácticas Dominantes y Celosas (Kasian y Painter, 1992).**

Es una escala de 22 ítems, de los cuales 11 se han extraído del *Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory* (Tolman, 1989; 1999). El objetivo de esta escala es valorar diferentes formas de agresión emocional en las relaciones íntimas a través de dos subescalas: tácticas dominantes, que consta de siete ítems que evalúan comportamiento controlador o coercitivo en las relaciones de pareja, y tácticas celosas, que consta de 4 ítems que hacen referencia al comportamiento celoso. Las preguntas son bidireccionales permitiendo obtener dos medidas: perpetración y victimización.

### **2.3.11. Escala de justificación de tácticas verbales/coercitivas (JVCT; Slep et al., 2001)**

Consta de 26 ítems (13 para hombres y 13 para mujeres) con 5 alternativas de respuesta que van de 1 (nunca justificado) a 5 (justificado en muchas ocasiones). En esta investigación se utilizó la escala para hombres a mujeres.

### **2.3.12. Actitudes hacia la violencia interpersonal (AIV; Riggs y O'Leary, 1996)**

Evalúa las creencias asociadas a la justificación de las agresiones físicas (empujones, bofetadas y golpes) entre hombres y mujeres a través de 6 ítems con 5 alternativas de respuesta que van de 1 (nunca) a 5 (muy a menudo). Para este estudio se eligió la escala de actitudes violentas entre hombres y mujeres.

## **5.4. Evaluación del apego a través cuatro estudios**

Para alcanzar los objetivos de esta tesis, se realizaron cuatro estudios empíricos que abordan la relación entre el apego y la violencia desde diferentes perspectivas. A continuación, se detalla el enfoque de cada uno de los estudios y cómo contribuyen a la evaluación del apego en esta población específica.

### **5.4.1. Estudio 1 (Capítulo 6): “Relación entre el estilo de apego y los tipos de agresión en hombres condenados por violencia de pareja: un meta-análisis.”**

En el primer estudio, se lleva a cabo un metanálisis que analiza la relación entre los estilos de apego inseguros (ansioso y evitativo) y los tipos de violencia ejercida por hombres condenados por delitos de violencia de género. El objetivo central de este estudio es evaluar de manera cuantitativa la relación entre los estilos de apego inseguros y las diferentes formas de agresión, particularmente la violencia física, psicológica y general.

### **5.4.2. Estudio 2 (Capítulo 7): “Cuestionario de apego adulto: evidencias de validez en una muestra de hombres condenados por violencia contra su pareja.”**

El segundo estudio tiene como objetivo principal evaluar la fiabilidad y validez del Cuestionario de Apego Adulto en hombres condenados por violencia de género. Este estudio es crucial en el contexto de la tesis, ya que permite conocer la adecuación y validez de la herramienta que se emplea en este trabajo evaluar el estilo de apego.

### **5.4.3. Estudio 3 (Capítulo 8): Estilo de apego inseguro y maltrato infantil: relación con la agresión en hombres condenados por violencia de pareja.**

En este tercer estudio, se examinan como el estilo de apego inseguro y las experiencias de maltrato en la infancia se relacionan con la manifestación de conductas agresivas en la adultez. Su

objetivo evaluar cómo las experiencias de abuso tempranas con las figuras de apego y el estilo de apego actual influyen en la agresión en la vida adulta.

#### **5.4.4. Estudio 4 (Capítulo 9): Hombres condenados por un delito de violencia de género en España: una tipología y caracterización basada en el análisis de clases latentes.**

El cuarto y último estudio de esta tesis se centra en desarrollar una tipología de hombres condenados por violencia de género, donde los estilos de apego se distribuyen entre diferentes perfiles de agresores junto con otras variables, como factores psicopatológicos y antecedentes de violencia familiar. El objetivo es conocer cómo los estilos de apego (seguro, evitativo y ansioso), se integran con otras variables psicológicas que han mostrado ser relevantes para conformar distintos tipos de agresores

## **Capítulo 6. Estilo de apego y tipos de agresión en hombres condenados por violencia contra su pareja: un metanálisis.**

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### **Resumen del capítulo**

Este metanálisis tiene como objetivo estudiar la relación entre los estilos de apego (ansioso y evitativo) y los distintos tipos de violencia (general, física y psicológica) en hombres heterosexuales que han sido condenados por un delito de violencia contra su pareja. Se empleó el enfoque Hartung-Knapp-Sidik-Jonkman para calcular los tamaños de efecto combinados y evaluar la influencia de variables moderadoras.

### **Principales resultados:**

El metanálisis mostró que el apego evitativo tiene una relación significativa y moderada con la violencia general ( $r = 0.25$ ), mientras que la relación con el apego ansioso fue baja y no significativa ( $r = 0.11$ ).

En cuanto a la violencia física, se observó una relación moderada y significativa con el apego ansioso ( $r = 0.22$ ), aunque con alta heterogeneidad entre los estudios, mientras que la relación con el apego evitativo fue casi nula ( $r = 0.02$ ).

Tanto el apego ansioso ( $r = 0.23$ ) como el apego evitativo ( $r = 0.17$ ) mostraron relaciones moderadas y significativas con la violencia psicológica, con una mayor heterogeneidad en el apego ansioso.

Además, los análisis de moderación mostraron que la edad moderaba la relación entre el apego ansioso y la violencia psicológica, indicando que a mayor edad, la tendencia al apego ansioso disminuye ( $-0.004$ ,  $p < .05$ ).

Por último, se observaron diferencias significativas en los tamaños del efecto en función del cuestionario empleado para medir apego: el Cuestionario de Escalas Relacionales (Relationship Scales Questionnaire [RSQ]) presentó la mayor correlación negativa en la relación entre apego ansioso y violencia general, mientras que la Escala de Apego Adulto (Adult Attachment Scale [AAS]) reveló una fuerte relación entre apego evitativo y violencia física.

### **Conclusiones:**

Este estudio aporta evidencia sobre cómo los estilos de apego inseguro se relacionan con los diferentes tipos de violencia. La relación entre el apego evitativo y la violencia general destaca la desconexión emocional en estos agresores, mientras que la asociación del apego ansioso con la violencia física y psicológica resalta su vulnerabilidad emocional y reactividad en relaciones íntimas. Los hallazgos sobre las variables moderadoras (como la edad y el tipo de cuestionario) sugieren que estas relaciones varían según características individuales y la metodología empleada.

# Journal of Family Violence

## Relationship between attachment style and types of aggression in men convicted of intimate partner violence: a meta-analysis.

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<b>Abstract:</b>	<p><b>Purpose:</b> This study investigates the relationship between insecure attachment styles, specifically anxious and avoidant, and the perpetration of different types of intimate partner violence (IPV) by men convicted of such crimes. The primary research question addresses whether specific insecure attachment styles are associated with distinct forms of IPV, including physical, psychological, and general violence.</p> <p><b>Methods:</b> A meta-analytical approach was employed to analyze existing studies that examine the correlation between insecure attachment styles and IPV in male offenders. The analysis focused on the pooled estimates of correlations between anxious attachment and psychological and physical violence, as well as avoidant attachment and general violence. Moderating factors such as age and the type of attachment assessment tools were also considered.</p> <p><b>Results:</b> The findings reveal significant correlations between anxious attachment style and both psychological and physical violence, and between avoidant attachment style and general violence. Moreover, these correlations were influenced by factors such as the offender's age and the specific tools used to assess attachment styles.</p> <p><b>Conclusions:</b> The study concludes that insecure attachment styles, particularly anxious and avoidant, are differentially associated with various forms of IPV perpetration. These results suggest that interventions targeting attachment-related issues may be crucial in addressing the dynamics of violence in intimate relationships. Future research should explore the interaction between attachment styles and other variables to develop more targeted and effective intervention strategies.</p>	

**Relationship between attachment style and types of aggression in men convicted of intimate partner violence: a meta-analysis.**

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## **Declarations**

### **Funding**

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### **Competing interests**

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

### **Ethics approval**

This study was approved by Deontological Commission of the Faculty of Psychology of the Complutense University of Madrid.

### **Authors contribution statements**

#### **Iria de la Osa Subtil:**

Led the conceptualization and design of the study. Conducted comprehensive bibliographic searches and critically reviewed the literature. Played a key role in the evaluation and analysis of selected articles. Managed data curation and performed formal statistical analysis. Oversaw project administration, including coordination of tasks and timelines. Developed and utilized relevant software tools for data analysis. Created visualizations and was the primary author of the original draft. Contributed significantly to the review and editing process.

#### **Andrés Arias Astray:**

Contributed to the study's conceptual framework and secured necessary funding and resources. Managed overall project administration and provided supervision throughout the research process. Ensured the validation of methodologies and findings. Played an integral role in the review and editing of the manuscript to enhance its scholarly quality.

#### **Pedro Vicente Mateo Fernández:**

Assisted in conducting bibliographic searches and reviewing the relevant literature. Contributed to the evaluation and analysis of selected articles, providing critical insights that shaped the study's conclusions.

#### **María José de Dios Duarte:**

Supported bibliographic searches and participated in the evaluation and analysis of articles. Provided valuable input during the analysis phase, contributing to the overall interpretation of results.

**Relationship between attachment style and types of aggression in men convicted of intimate partner violence: a meta-analysis.**

### **Abstract**

#### **Purpose:**

This study investigates the relationship between insecure attachment styles, specifically anxious and avoidant, and the perpetration of different types of intimate partner violence (IPV) by men convicted of such crimes. The primary research question addresses whether specific insecure attachment styles are associated with distinct forms of IPV, including physical, psychological, and general violence.

#### **Methods:**

A meta-analytical approach was employed to analyze existing studies that examine the correlation between insecure attachment styles and IPV in male offenders. The analysis focused on the pooled estimates of correlations between anxious attachment and psychological and physical violence, as well as avoidant attachment and general violence. Moderating factors such as age and the type of attachment assessment tools were also considered.

#### **Results:**

The findings reveal significant correlations between anxious attachment style and both psychological and physical violence, and between avoidant attachment style and general violence. Moreover, these correlations were influenced by factors such as the offender's age and the specific tools used to assess attachment styles.

#### **Conclusions:**

The study concludes that insecure attachment styles, particularly anxious and avoidant, are differentially associated with various forms of IPV perpetration. These results suggest that interventions targeting attachment-related issues may be crucial in addressing the dynamics of violence in intimate relationships. Future research should explore the interaction between attachment styles and other variables to develop more targeted and effective intervention strategies.

*Keywords:* attachment styles, intimate partner violence, convicted men, aggression, meta-analysis.

Violence against women is a serious social problem that entails severe personal, social and legal consequences. So much so that it has been recognized by the World Health Organization (WHO, 1995, 2000) as a global health problem. The United Nations (1993) defines violence against women as “*any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or mental harm or suffering to women*”. On the other hand, intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to behavior that generates physical, sexual and psychological harm to a partner or ex-partner (WHO, 2014). While it is true that intimate partner violence exists towards both men and women, women are the main victims of intimate partner violence (Stöckl et al. 2013).

The magnitude of the problem of intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW) is evident. Almost 30% of women have been victims of some form of violence by a partner during their lifetime. Around 30% of the women who have been murdered have been killed by their spouses. (WHO, 2013).

The etiology of violence against women, particularly by their intimate partners, has been attempted to be understood by appealing to different explanatory factors.

The ecological model (Heise, 1998), which integrates individual, relational, community and social factors, seems to be the most appropriate in this regard. This research focuses on the specific study of individual factors, without ignoring the relevance of the rest. Thus, when the individual factors of aggressors are considered, it is widely documented that men who assault their partners exhibit deficits in the resources necessary for optimal interpersonal interaction (Ansbro, 2008; Babcock et al., 2000; Echeburúa et al, 2004). Specifically, these men present limitations in impulse control, conflict resolution and communication skills, as well as inadequate and distorted beliefs related to gender roles, cognitive biases, pathological jealousy or substance use (Redondo, et al., 2009; Graña & Redondo, 2010). Clinical psychology considers these variables to be modifiable. Therefore, a treatment avenue opens up for perpetrators of intimate partner violence by being able to work with these men on those variables.

Paradoxically, interpersonal violence usually occurs between people who maintain different types of relationships and are deeply linked to each other (Meloy, 2003). The relational nature of IPVAW means that the study of attachment in relation to this phenomenon may be a key to its better understanding and therefore to its treatment. Although the characteristics of the attachment do not provide a direct explanation of aggression, they could establish a potentially useful frame of reference for analyzing the psychological processes that mediate violent behavior (Ansbro, 2008).

Attachment is the bond generated between the child and their primary caregivers. Bowlby (1973, 1986) hypothesized that human beings have a biological predisposition to approach others in search of protection and

security. That is, attachment could be considered as an adaptive process. The so-called attachment system is also defined as an organized behavioral complex, made up of a set of relatively stable behaviors. Its function is to maintain proximity to the caregiver. Furthermore, this system establishes a balance between proximity and exploratory behaviors, which depend on the existing dangers in the environment, and access to the attachment figure. It is suggested that through these behavioral patterns three different attachment styles can be established between child and parent: secure attachment (seeking contact and proximity with the caregiver and calming when the caregiver approaches), insecure avoidant attachment (ignores the attachment figure when it is encountered and avoids proximity and interaction with it), resistant or ambivalent insecure attachment (seeks contact with the caregiver, but does not calm down with its proximity) (Ainsworth et al., 1978).

Despite their relative stability, attachment patterns may change throughout life cycle (Ainsworth, 1979). Attachment in adulthood is shaped by childhood attachments and experiences accumulated throughout life (Feeney & Noller, 1996). These experiences configure internal operative models, which are cognitive-emotional schemes that automatically guide the relationship with others and establish the way of perceiving interactions based on previous experience. These models form a self-image and an image of others, which can be positively or negatively charged (Bartholomew, 1990; Bretherton, 1985; Melero & Cantero, 2008). Trying to integrate theories on love, Shaver and Hazan (1988) found parallels between infant attachment and couple love in adulthood. These authors developed a measure to establish different attachment styles in adulthood: secure, avoidant and anxious-ambivalent.

Following this work, Bartholomew (1990) and Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991) developed a model of four attachment prototypes. They combined the mental model that the person has about him/herself (with a positive and a negative pole) and the model that he/she has about others (also with positive and negative polarity). Thus, the four prototypes of adult attachment included in their model were secure, preoccupied, dismissing/avoidant and fearful/avoidant. Individuals who hold positive models about others would manifest secure or preoccupied attachment models. On the other hand, those who hold negative models of attachment to others would manifest dismissing/avoidant or fearful/avoidant attachment models.

These four attachment prototypes are explained and correspond to a linear combination of two dimensions: anxiety and avoidance. Anxiety refers to vigilance or comfort in attachments. When anxiety is high it implies concern in relationships. When anxiety is low, it refers to the feeling of security when interacting with others. On the other hand, avoidance corresponds to the tendency to seek proximity in relationships or to avoid them. A high level of avoidance is associated with disconnection and distancing in social relationships, while a

low level of avoidance is related to greater ease, comfort and openness in dealing with others (Yárnoz-Yaben, 2008).

Attachment seems to be closely related to IPVAV (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). This type of violence could be understood as an exaggerated response to a partner's behavior perceived as hurtful (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007) or as a set of behaviors intended to avoid the breakup of the relationship (Bartholomew & Allison, 2006; Dutton, 2007).

While secure attachment has been associated with a greater likelihood of using prosocial skills (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018), insecure attachment has been linked to emotional, cognitive and behavioral difficulties expressed as negative emotionality, anger, jealousy and hostility (Dutton et al., 2016).

In the romantic context, anxious attachment has been linked to problems in independent functioning, conflict management, having to "flare up" during conflict and quickly regretting it, a tendency to blame oneself, and regulation problems that could be interpreted as being too demanding of one's partner. In short, it is possible that anxious individuals, who depend on the other person to regulate themselves, may engage in behaviors that are excessive and may constitute harassment for the other person, thus damaging the relationship (Gormley, 2005). The anxious attachment style has been related to both psychological and physical violence, in certain contexts in a mild manner (Lawson and Brossart, 2009).

On the other hand, the avoidant attachment style has been linked to difficulties in closeness and intimacy, maintaining a cold and resentful attitude during conflicts, a tendency to blame others and regulating their emotions from an emotional distance with their partner (Gormley, 2005). This style manifests clear preferences for maintaining distance in relationships (Babcock et al., 2000). Individuals with this attachment style react negatively to relational dynamics that can lead to an escalation of violence, with a high need for self-control and control of the partner (Fuendeling, 1998). They may tend to devalue their partner and the relationship, employing defense strategies such as deactivating their attachment systems to manage anxiety (Bowlby, 1980). This way of bonding has been associated not only with psychological abuse, such as insults and put-downs aimed at increasing the emotional distance with the partner, but also with acts of physical violence perceived as forms of control or as reactions to accumulated resentment that eventually explode into anger (Lawson & Brossart, 2009; Mikulincer & Orbach, 1995).

In this context, the well-known demand-withdrawal phenomenon, which refers to the pairing of an avoidant man and an anxious woman in relationships, has served as a model to explain one of the combinations of factors that can give rise to IPVAV (Christensen & Heavey 1990; Dumas et al., 2008). In this combination

of partner anxiety and avoidance, the anxious attachment person is more committed to the relationship, and hyperactivates the attachment system to avoid abandonment. However, the person with avoidant attachment disengages to maintain distance due to the perception that the other person is unavailable. Avoidant individuals may feel high pressure from their partner to remain committed to the relationship, which exacerbates their need for distance and this, in turn, causes anxious individuals to further hyperactivate their fear of abandonment. The avoidant individual, under pressure, may resort to violent behavior as a strategy to maintain their space (Bond & Bond, 2004).

Finally, for fearful attachment aggressors, the cause of violence may be found in childhood experiences of abuse or rejection by primary caregivers. These experiences promote a negative self-model and an untrustworthy image of others. Consequently, they experience abandonment anxiety as they perceive their partner as unavailable, responding with aggression (Dutton, 1995; Dutton et al., 1994). According to Brennan et al. (1998), these men may manifest disorganized attachment behaviors, alternately presenting proximity and avoidance behaviors.

In terms of their transformation, attachment style is a potentially important variable for treatment outcomes (Eagle, 2006). This is due to its close links with IPVAV and because it is a modifiable variable that can be addressed in therapy (Allen and Fonagy, 2006). For this reason, and based on current evidence, treatment models for those who physically abuse their intimate partner have been developed based on attachment theory (Sonkin and Dutton, 2003). However, despite positive results from interventions with physical abusers, there are still not enough studies with significant results on the efficacy of these intervention programs (Arias et al., 2003).

Undoubtedly, it is necessary to pay specific attention to both types of attachment and types of violence when planning treatments for those who physically abuse their intimate partner. In view of this, and to guide such work and future research, the purpose of this study is to determine whether there is a relationship between insecure attachment style (anxious and avoidant) and the different types of violence (physical and psychological) in samples of heterosexual men with institutional evidence of having assaulted their partner. For this purpose, a meta-analysis will be carried out with the characteristics described below.

### **Method**

This meta-analysis was performed following the recommendations proposed in the PRISMA statement (Liberati, et al. 2009). The PICOS strategy (Participants, Interventions, Comparisons, Outcome, and Study design) was used to establish the objectives and determine the inclusion and exclusion criteria for the eligible

studies. In the search for evidence, we considered studies whose participants were heterosexual adult men, gender aggressors, who had been violent with their partner and/or were required to participate in a specific treatment program for intimate partner aggressors. Studies were required to report at least sample size, participants' IPVAV status, a measure of attachment, a measure of aggression through a psychometrically validated test, and other data necessary for meta-analysis. No temporal restriction was established. This work was limited to studies published in the scientific literature in English and Spanish. We excluded studies in which aggression in IPVAV had been self-reported, studies with a community sample and studies whose sample was under 18 years of age, except for longitudinal studies in which the last assessment had been carried out in adulthood. Systematic reviews, meta-analyses, books, book chapters, doctoral theses and commentaries were discarded. The interest in circumscribing the participants to men convicted of violence against their partner was based both on scientific criteria (to determine the relationships to be studied in this specific type of population) and on clinical interests, as these are the men with whom the research team works. The complete procedure is described in Figure 1. The searches were completed in February 2024 in the following databases: Web of Science, Scopus, Psycinfo and PubMed. In the latter, the syntax was adapted to Mesh terms. Consequently, for the realization of the search syntax, keywords were classified into two categories. First, reference was made to IPVAV, resulting in the following phrase after the thesaurus search (male batterer OR male abuser OR intimate partner violence OR partner-violent men OR domestic violence offender\* OR gender violence aggressor\*). Second, terms related to the attachment construct were included (adult attachment OR attachment style OR secure attachment OR avoidant attachment OR fearful attachment OR assessment attachment OR assessment attachment). In all databases, the four syntax categories mentioned above were joined in the advanced search with the Boolean operator "AND". The complete procedure is described in Figure 2.

Figure 1

The articles retrieved from the databases were exported to the bibliographic software Mendeley, where duplicates were removed. Subsequently, a first screening was conducted by reading the title, abstract and keywords. Articles that met any of the aforementioned exclusion criteria were discarded. After the first screening, a second selection was carried out with a complete reading of the articles that were not excluded to finish with the selection of the articles.

Figure 2

### **Data analysis**

To perform this meta-analysis, the Pearson correlation coefficient ( $r$ ) was chosen as the main measure of effect given its prevalence in primary studies and because it is the measure of choice for assessing associations between quantitative variables (Botella & Sánchez-Meca, 2015; Borenstein et al., 2009). To address the problem of the asymmetric distribution of the Pearson correlation coefficient, a Fisher transformation was applied before proceeding with the analyses, subsequently back-transforming the results to their original correlation values to facilitate interpretation. A random-effects model was fitted rather than a fixed-effects model as it was more conservative and better adjusted to the variable nature of the designs of the selected studies (Botella & Sanchez-Meca, 2015; Hedges & Vevea, 1998). To combine the estimates of the different studies, an inverse variance weighting approach was used, adopting the method of DerSimonian and Laird (1986).

Heterogeneity between studies was assessed using several statistics: the Q test with its hypothesis test to determine the presence of significant heterogeneity, the I<sup>2</sup> index to determine what percentage of total variation is due to heterogeneity and not to chance, and  $\tau^2$  to provide an estimate of between-study variance as a measure of dispersion of true effects (Borenstein et al., 2009). The presence of possible moderating variables was studied stepwise by fitting a meta-regression in the case of quantitative moderating variables (Borenstein et al., 2009).

To ensure that publication bias did not distort the findings, several tests were implemented, including Kendall's tau calculation and Egger's regression test (Egger et al., 1997) supplemented with the *Trim and Fill* method (Duval and Tweedie, 2000) and Rosenberg's safety number (Rosenberg, 2005). All analyses were carried out using the metafor package for R software (Viechtbauer, 2010).

## Results

After screening, the articles were read and analyzed, and the information was collected in the coding manual (Table 1). A total of 14 studies were selected. The selected papers were published between 1994 and 2023. The sample size ranged from 33 to 1.845 subjects, with a total number of participants of 3.450. Their median ages ranged from 30 to 40 years ( $\bar{X} = 34.41$ ).

-----Table 1-----

### Combined effect size

To find out the relationship between types of violence and attachment styles (anxious and avoidant), the meta-analysis approach was employed using significance testing through the Hartung-Knapp-Sidik-Jonkman method (see Table 2).

## -----Table 2-----

First, it is observed that general violence and its relationship with anxious style shows a relatively low combined effect ( $r = 0.11$ , 95% CI=-0.04 and 0.25) that cannot be confirmed as not significantly different from 0. In contrast, the association between general violence and avoidant behaviors is significant and more pronounced ( $r = 0.25$ , 95% CI= 0.19 to 0.31), highlighting a strong correlation and without any evidence of heterogeneity between studies ( $I^2 = 0.00\%$ ,  $\tau^2=0$ ).

In the case of physical violence, we found a moderate but significant relationship with anxious attachment ( $r = 0.22$ , 95% CI: 0.11 to 0.32), although the observed heterogeneity ( $I^2 = 69.56\%$ ) points to be high between studies. On the other hand, the connection with avoidance is practically nonexistent ( $r = 0.02$ , 95% CI: -0.23 to 0.27) and not significant.

Finally, the results on psychological violence show moderate and significant effects on both anxiety ( $r = 0.23$ , 95% CI: 0.13 to 0.37) and avoidance ( $r = 0.17$ , 95% CI: 0.12 to 0.23), although with varying degrees of heterogeneity, being significantly high in anxiety, but not in avoidance ( $I^2_{\text{anxious}} = 75.09\%$ ,  $I^2_{\text{avoidant}} = 21.45\%$ ).

### Publication bias

The results (Table 3) suggest that, in general, the set of studies shows no significant signs of publication bias. Specifically, for general violence, in relation to anxiety, analyses using Trim and Fill, Kendall's tau and Egger's test reveal an absence of bias (with 0 Trim and Fill adjustments and p-values of 0.57 and 0.90, respectively). However, a Rosenberg safety number of 0 is observed. In the case of avoidance, although the Trim and Fill method suggests the need for minimal adjustment (1 study), Kendall's and Egger's tau tests do not indicate the presence of publication bias in a significant way ( $p=0.15$  and  $p=0.10$ , respectively). Likewise, the Rosenberg safety number is 36, suggesting a certain resistance of these results to publication bias.

## ----- Table 3 -----

For physical violence, in both anxiety and avoidance responses, the analyses confirm the absence of publication bias, with 0 adjustments needed in the Trim and Fill method and p-values that do not indicate significant biases in any of the statistical tests performed. This is complemented by a Rosenberg safety number of 12 for anxiety, but 0 for avoidance.

Psychological violence presents certain adjustments indicated by the Trim and Fill method (3 studies for both anxiety and avoidance). However, the p-values obtained in Kendall's and Egger's tau tests ( $p=0.40$  and  $p=0.34$  for anxiety;  $p=0.06$  and  $p=0.34$  for avoidance, respectively) suggest that there is no significant concern for publication bias. These findings are consistent with Rosenberg's safety numbers (23 and 36, respectively).

### **Moderation Analysis**

The study of moderating variables (see Table 4) reflected significant differences in effect sizes according to the attachment measurement scale used. Specifically, in the relationship between general violence and anxious attachment, the scale used to measure attachment modulated this relationship significantly ( $F=13.78$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). Strong and significant negative correlations were obtained in the RSQ scale ( $r=-0.55$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), while the AAS scale showed weaker negative correlations ( $r=-0.25$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). The rest of the scales maintained moderate positive correlations ( $r=0.34$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). On the other hand, the relationship between physical violence and avoidant attachment was moderated by the choice of attachment measurement scale ( $F=7.91$ ,  $p<0.05$ ). The AAS scale revealed a strong and significant negative correlation ( $r=-0.80$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), indicating that a higher score on the avoidant attachment scale, as measured through AAS, is significantly associated with a decrease in physical violence. This latter low correlation is consistent, given that on this scale lower scores reflect greater avoidant attachment.

----- Table 4 -----

Meta regression results (see Table 5) indicate a significant moderation of the variable age between psychological violence and anxious attachment, showing that increasing average age is associated with a decrease in anxious attachment tendency ( $-0.004$ ,  $p < .05$ ). This suggests a possible decrease in susceptibility toward anxious attachment responses as people age. The inclusion of age as a moderator brings clarity to the possible sources of this variability from the initial model. Additionally, a decrease in variability from 75.09% to 66.02% is evident in the moderated model, with the moderated model explaining 38.25% of the variance.

----- Table 5 -----

### **Discussion**

The relationship between attachment insecurity and violence in intimate relationships has been a relevant topic of research in recent years (Arseneault et al. 2023; Douadi et al. 2023; Dutton and White, 2012). Both anxious and avoidant attachment have been shown to play a key role in the dynamics of intimate partner violence. This study makes a contribution to the existing knowledge on this subject by highlighting the existence of different relationships between types of violence and types of insecure attachment in non-community samples. It contrasts our findings with those of other meta-analyses and previous studies and revealing variations in the magnitude of the correlations.

Regarding general violence, the results obtained in this study show significant inconsistency with other similar meta-analyses that included community samples. This study found a low and non-significant

relationship between general perpetration and anxious attachment, which contrasts with the findings of Keilholtz et al. (2023) and Velotti et al. (2022), who reported correlations of  $r = 0.23$  and  $r = 0.27$ , respectively. In contrast, this study found a significant and moderate relationship between general violence and avoidant attachment, with no heterogeneity issues among analyzed studies. Other meta-analyses conducted with community samples have not found the relationship between these two variables to be significantly greater than zero (Keilholtz et al. 2023; Velotti et al. 2022). Additionally, papers comparing violent and non-violent men have found a significantly higher presence of avoidant and anxious attachment among men who have assaulted their partners (Ogilvie et al. 2014).

With respect to psychological violence, a significant and moderate relationship was found with anxious attachment style, and a somewhat lower but more consistent relationship with avoidant attachment style, exhibiting fewer heterogeneity problems. These results are consistent with those obtained by Velotti et al. (2022), who found a slightly higher combined effect between anxious attachment and psychological aggression, and a slightly lower effect with avoidant attachment compared to the sample of studies analyzed here. The correlation between anxious attachment and psychological ( $r=0.23$ ) and physical violence ( $r=0.22$ ) suggests a consistent influence of this type of attachment on different forms of violence. This finding is in line with other studies that demonstrated a somewhat stronger relationship between anxious attachment and physical violence (Velotti et al. 2022; Spencer et al. 2020).

However, the low correlation between avoidant attachment and physical violence ( $r=0.02$ ) contrasts with other meta-analyses (Velotti et al., 2022; Spencer et al., 2021) that found a slight but not substantial effect. This discrepancy suggests that, in certain contexts, avoidant attachment may not directly translate into physical aggression but could be more related to other forms of violence, such as emotional abuse or neglect (Gormley, 2005).

Regarding sexual aggression, only two studies have investigated its relationship with avoidant and anxious attachment. Rankin et al. (2000) identified a significant and moderate correlation with avoidant attachment, whereas Douadi et al. (2023) observed a weaker relationship with anxious attachment. Although these studies could not be included in the meta-analysis, their results provide a valuable starting point for future research, aligning with other studies suggesting a moderate relationship between sexual aggression and both attachment styles (Velotti et al. 2020).

These findings underscore the complexity of the relationships between attachment styles and violence in intimate relationships. The nonsignificant relationship between anxious attachment and general violence, as

opposed to the moderate relationship found with psychological and physical violence, may indicate that the nature of violence perpetrated by individuals with anxious attachment is more specific and directly related to their fears of rejection and relationship anxiety. This is consistent with the theory that anxious attachment may lead to overly demanding relationship behaviors as a misguided means of seeking closeness or securing the availability of the other, particularly in contexts of high emotion or conflict (Kunce and Shaver, 1994). More specifically, a relationship has been found between anxious attachment in physical abusers and psychological abuse in the form of control (Gormley, 2005). This relationship has not been observed in aggressors with avoidant attachment (Sonkin et al., 2019). This supports the results obtained in other studies, which show that individuals with anxious attachment exhibit greater controlling behaviors towards their partner in an attempt to reduce the chances of abandonment (Allison et al., 2008).

People with anxious attachment are characterized by a constant concern about their partner's emotional availability, frequently fearing that they will be abandoned or not loved enough. This hyperactivation of the attachment system can lead to controlling or manipulative behaviors as inappropriate strategies for maintaining proximity and securing a partner's attention (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018). The fear of abandonment fosters hypersensitivity to perceived threats in the relationship, which can increase the likelihood of conflict and, under stress, manifest as verbal, emotional, or even physical aggression (Davila and Bradbury, 2001). Ineffective communication also plays a crucial role in how anxious attachment can lead to aggression. The inability to express needs and desires in a healthy manner, coupled with a tendency toward emotional intensity, can frustrate and discomfort the partner, exacerbating misunderstandings and conflict. This cycle of misunderstandings and excessive emotional responses can escalate into aggressive behaviors as an attempt to gain attention or as an expression of desperation and fear of abandonment (Collins, 1996). Additionally, the low self-esteem and fear of rejection inherent in anxious attachment may motivate aggression as a distorted way of asserting self-worth within the relationship or as a defense mechanism against anticipated hurt. This dynamic underscores the importance of addressing insecurities and enhancing communication and conflict management skills in interventions for couples with anxious attachment (Feeney & Noller, 1996).

On the other hand, the significant and moderate relationship between avoidant attachment and general violence, combined with the low correlation with physical violence, suggests that individuals with avoidant attachment may be more inclined to employ forms of violence that do not involve direct physical aggression. This could manifest in behaviors such as emotional withdrawal, manipulation, or verbal aggression, which are consistent with their tendency to withdraw emotionally in situations of stress or conflict and maintain self-

control (Gormley, 2005; Fuendeling, 1998). It could also be expressed through other types of violence not specified in measures of psychological and physical violence, occasionally triggering outbursts of severe violence (Lawson & Brossard, 2009).

Avoidant individuals tend to value independence and self-sufficiency, avoiding intimacy and appearing vulnerable. This perceived self-sufficiency can lead to conflict within the relationship, as the partner may interpret this emotional detachment as rejection (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2018). The inability of avoidant individuals to manage conflict effectively, often resorting to emotional avoidance or suppression, can lead to the buildup of frustrations and resentments that may manifest as aggression (Gormley, 2005). Furthermore, there appears to be a consistent relationship between avoidance and relationship dissatisfaction (Li & Chan, 2012; Feeney, 2016). Along the same lines, avoidant individuals may maintain biases in social information processing, interpreting a partner's actions or intentions negatively, which may trigger defensive or aggressive responses to protect their autonomy (Dodge, 1980). Additionally, avoidant or suppressive strategies of emotional regulation may hinder the recognition of abusive relationships (Zamir and Lavee, 2015), suggesting that self-reported results on the type of aggression could be biased. The management of conflict situations in the relationship becomes a fundamental piece, associated with the demand/withdrawal phenomenon (Nickels, 2022). It is common for people with an avoidant style to perceive conflict as a threat and employ non-adaptive resolution strategies (Shi, 2003). In situations where it is difficult to avoid conflict, avoidant individuals may change their resolution strategy by using aggression as a way of coping with the conflict. Difficulty in communicating needs and emotions clearly also contributes to aggressive dynamics, as the inability to express vulnerabilities may provoke anger and frustration directed toward the partner. These reactions may be viewed as attempts to reestablish a safe emotional distance or to reduce perceived vulnerability, reflecting maladaptive self-preservation strategies (Cassidy & Shaver, 2016; Gormley & Lopez, 2010).

The variability in the results among different studies included in this meta-analysis, including the presence of significant relationships in some cases but not in others and the varying magnitudes of these relationships suggest that other variables may interfere with these relationships. Variables such as age, relationship duration, presence of relationship stress or conflict, and personal history of abuse or neglect may influence how insecure attachment relates to violence in intimate relationships (Choe et al. 2022; de la Osa et al. 2022; McClure and Parmenter, 2020). In our work we found that the older the age, the lower the relationship between anxious attachment style and the use of psychological violence. This finding aligns with theories suggesting that as people age, they tend to use fewer violent strategies (Lindeman et al. 1997). Additionally, the

scale used to measure attachment appears to affect the relationship between general aggression and anxious attachment, as well as between psychological aggression and avoidant attachment. Stronger relationships were found between avoidant attachment and psychological aggression when the AAS was used, and between anxious attachment and general aggression when measures were taken with the RSQ.

This meta-analysis provides important insights into the relationship between attachment styles and the type of violence in intimate relationships among men who have been convicted of a crime of intimate partner violence or were in a treatment program for this problem. However, there are certain limitations indicated that warrant caution in interpreting these results. First, the presence of significant heterogeneity in some analyses, especially those related to physical violence and anxiety, suggests that unexamined factors could be influencing the observed relationships. The variability across studies in terms of designs, samples, and contexts may limit the generalizability of the results. Second, analysis of publication bias indicates a general absence of bias in most cases. However, the need for adjustments in some analyses and the variability in the Rosenberg safety numbers suggest that unpublished studies or unreported negative results could influence the overall effect estimates. Third, the interpretation of moderating effects, especially those related to attachment measurement scales and demographic variables such as age, necessitates an emphasis on the fact that differences in the operationalization of constructs and sample characteristics may significantly influence the observed relationships. These results underscore the need for further standardization in the measurement of the constructs and a more detailed analysis of how contextual and demographic factors may mediate or moderate these relationships.

The interplay between insecure attachment styles and their relationship with types of violence in IPVAW constitutes a critical area of research for understanding the underlying dynamics that trigger or maintain violence in the intimate partner setting. Current findings suggest that both anxious and avoidant attachment play a particular role in these dynamics. This points to the need for future research focused on dyadic processes and the interaction between attachment, aggression, and other contextual and relational variables. Investigating how the combination of attachment styles between partners influences the manifestation of violence would allow for a deeper understanding of the complexities involved in these relational dynamics. Additionally, it is crucial to explore how attachment-influenced stressors, anger regulation, conflict, and communication patterns act as mediators or moderators in the relationship between attachment and aggression. It is also essential to explore whether attachment style itself plays a mediating or moderating role. Including variables such as relationship satisfaction, social support, and personal trauma history in the analysis could offer richer insights into how

context and individual experiences interact with attachment to influence aggression. These complex approaches could contribute to unraveling the specific conditions under which insecure attachment is most strongly associated with violent behaviors. The use of longitudinal and mixed methodologies would contribute significantly to this field, providing insights into the direction of these relationships and capturing the depth of the subjective experiences of the individuals involved (Bradbury and Karney, 2010). Finally, future research should be directed toward the development and evaluation of attachment-focused therapeutic interventions. It will be desirable to evaluate couple therapy programs that address insecure attachment patterns, improving communication and emotional regulation, as they could have a substantial impact on reducing intimate partner violence (Johnson, 2008). Such interventions should be informed by a detailed understanding of attachment dynamics and their interaction with other relational and contextual factors, underscoring the importance of an integrated, dyadic approach in future research. This holistic perspective will not only enrich the theoretical basis relating attachment to violence in intimate relationships but also facilitate the creation of more effective strategies to promote healthy relationships and prevent intimate partner aggression.

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**Table 1.***Coding manual.*

Article	Year	N	Age	Attachment measures	Aggression measures	Metanalysis
Brassard et al. (2014)	2014	320	35,00	ECR	CTS-2	Physical, Psychological
Douadi et al. (2023)	2023	1.845	37,29	ECR-12	CTS2S	Physical, Psychological
Dutton et al., (1994)	1994	120	35,00	RSQ, RQ	PMWI	Psychological
Genest & Mathieu, (2014)	2014	80	34,30	ECR	CTS-2	General
Kim & Zane, (2004)	2004	102	40,70	RSQ	CTS	Physical
Lawson & Brossart (2009)	2009	49	31,37	AAS	CTS	General, Physical, Psychological
Lawson & Brossart, (2013)	2013	132	30,47	AAS	MCTS	General
Lawson & Malnar, (2011)	2011	100	32,20	AAS	MCTS	General, Psychological
Lawson et al., (2006)	2006	33	35,00	AAS	CTS-2	General
Lawson, (2008)	2008	100	32,20	AAS	CTS	General, Psychological
Mahalik et al., (2005)	2005	43	34,90	RQ	CBI	General
Mauricio et al. (2007)	2007	192	33,00	ECR	CTS, PMWS	Physical, Psychological
Osa-Subtil et al. (2022)	2022	265	39,30	AAQ	AQ	General, Physical, Psychological
Rakin et al (2000)	2000	69	31,00	ASQ	MWA	Physical, Psychological

**Table 2.**

*Combined estimates for type of violence in anxiety and avoidance (random effects model).*

	k	r.	95%CI	t	Q(df)	I <sup>2</sup>	τ <sup>2</sup>
General violence							
Anxious Attachment	8	0.11	-0.04; 0.25	1.70	26.52***	73.61%	0.031
Avoidant Attachment	8	0.25	0.19; 0.31	9.88***	3.59	0.00%	0 (SE=0.0059)
Physical violence							
Anxious Attachment	7	0.22	0.11; 0.32	5.15**	19.70**	69.56%	0.008
Avoidant Attachment	7	0.02	-0.23; 0.27	0.22	36.46***	83.55%	0.019
Psychological violence							
Anxious Attachment	9	0.23	0.13; 0.37	4.69**	32.11***	75.09%	0.013
Avoidant Attachment	9	0.17	0.12; 0.23	7.12***	10.18	21.45%	0.001

*Note:* \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ .  $k$  = number of studies;  $r.$  = combined effect size.

**Table 3.***Statistical test for publication bias*

	<i>Trim and Fill</i>	Kendall's tau	Egger's test	Rosenberg safety number
General violence				
Anxious Attachment	0	-0.59 (p=0.57)	0.03 (p=0.90)	0
Avoidant Attachment	1	-1.64 (p=0.15)	-0.47 (p=0.10)	36
Physical violence				
Anxious Attachment	0	1.11 (p=0.31)	0.14 (p=0.77)	12
Avoidant Attachment	0	-1.32 (p=0.24)	-0.14 (p=0.77)	0
Psychological violence				
Anxious Attachment	3	-0.87 (p=0.40)	-0.25 (p=0.34)	23
Avoidant Attachment	3	2.18 (p=0.06)	0.25 (p=0.34)	36

**Table 4.**

*Moderation analysis for categorical variables (attachment assessment and aggression assessment).*

		Variable	Level	k	r.	95%CI	t	F
General violence	Anxious Attachment	Attachment assessment	RSQ	8	-0.55	-0.42; -0.07	<b>-4.80***</b>	<b>13.78***</b>
			AAS	8	-0.25	-0.84; -0.25	<b>-3.62**</b>	
			Others	8	0.34	0.20; 0.47	<b>6.55***</b>	
	Avoidant Attachment	Attachment assessment	RSQ	8	-0.008	0.15; 0.38	6.19	0.65
			AAS	8	-0.10	-0.15; 0.13	-0.14	
			Others	8	0.26	0.15; 0.38	6.19	
Physical violence	Anxious Attachment	Attachment assessment	RSQ	7	-0.14	-0.37; 0.09	-1.67	1.46
			AAS	7	-0.15	-0.65; 0.35	-0.84	
			Others	7	0.30	0.12; 0.48	4.56	
	Avoidant Attachment	Attachment assessment	RSQ	7	-0.03	-0.30; 0.24	-0.30	<b>7.91*</b>
			AAS	7	-0.80	<b>-1.38; -0.23**</b>	-3.88	
			Others	7	0.11	0.16; 0.38	1.43	
Psychological violence	Anxious Attachment	Attachment assessment	RSQ	9	0.20	0.06; 0.34	3.58	<b>10.83**</b>
			AAS	9	-0.16	-0.33; 0.02	-2.16	
			Others	9	0.23	0.16; 0.30	7.77	
	Avoidant Attachment	Attachment assessment	RSQ	9	-0.01	-0.17; 0.14	-0.27	0.49
			AAS	9	0.06	-0.12; 0.25	0.85	
			Others	9	0.17	0.08; 0.25**	<b>4.86**</b>	
		Aggression assessment	CTS	8	0.04	-0.11; 0.19	0.69	4.98
			Others	8	0.26	-0.02; 0.54	2.23	
		Aggression assessment	CTS	7	0.21	0.07; 0.35	<b>3.96*</b>	0.06
			Others	7	0.02	-0.24; 0.29	0.24	
		Aggression assessment	CTS	9	0.25	0.09; 0.41	<b>3.63**</b>	0.01
			Others	9	-0.01	-0.30; 0.28	-0.10	
		Aggression assessment	CTS	9	0.14	0.09; 0.18	7.22**	3.49
			Others	9	0.09	-0.02; 0.21	1.86	

Note: \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ , in bold the significant results

**Table 5.**

*Meta-regression for mean age moderator variable (random-effects model with DerSimonian-Laird estimator).*

	k	b [95%IC]	t	F
General violence				
Anxious Attachment	8	0.03 [-0.01; 0.08]	1.58	2.25
Avoidant Attachment	8	-0.001 [-0.02; 0.01]	-0.22	0.03
Physical violence				
Anxious Attachment	7	0.01 [-0.01; 0.04]	1.40	1.23
Avoidant Attachment	7	0.01 [-0.07; 0.09]	0.29	0.25
Psychological violence				
Anxious Attachment	9	-0.004 [-0.008; -0.0007]	<b>-2.84*</b>	<b>7.13**</b>
Avoidant Attachment	9	0.002 [-0.0004; 0.004]	1.98	3.67

*Note:* \* =  $p < .05$ ; \*\* =  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ ; in bold the significant results

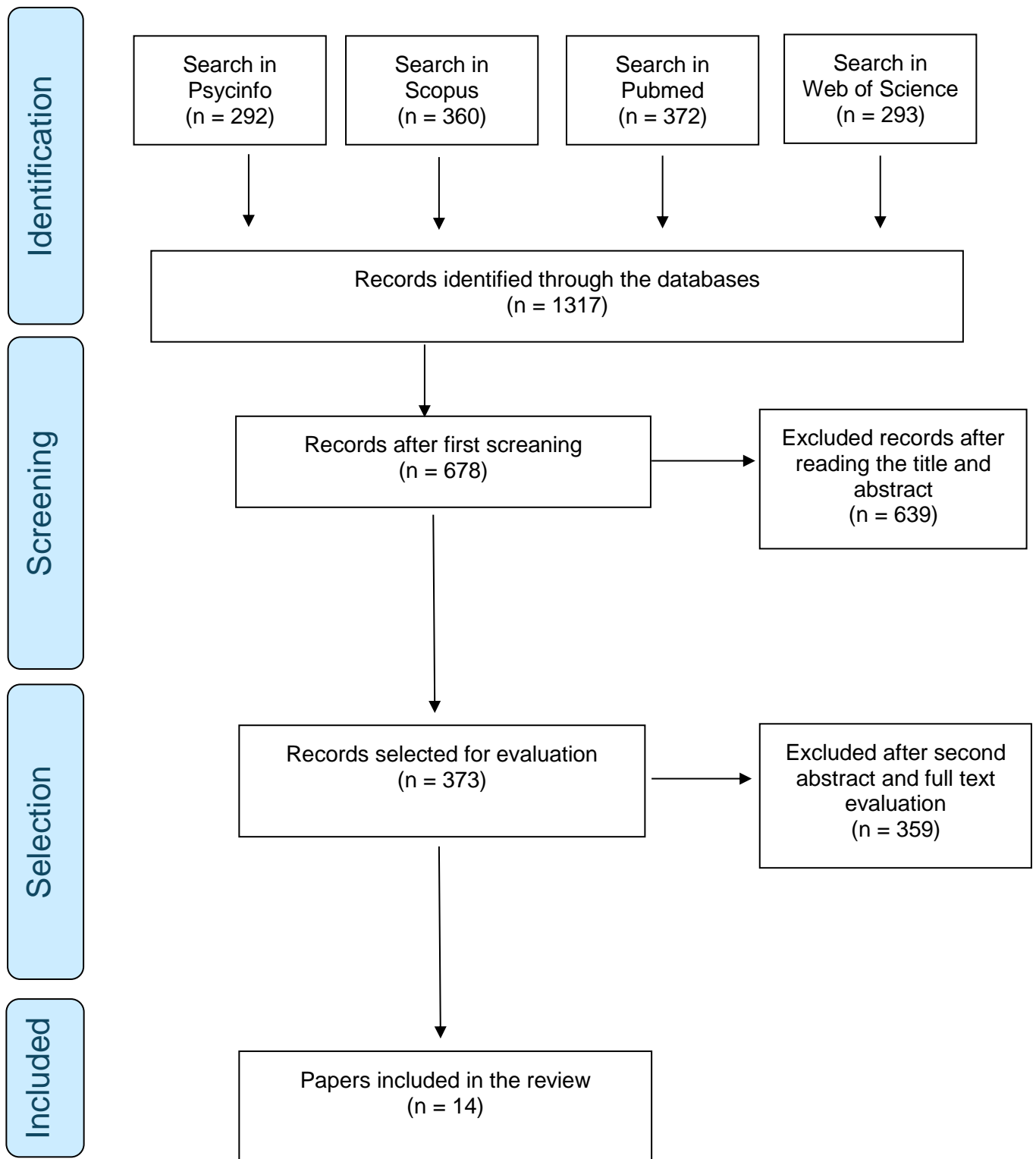
**Figure 1.**

*Prototyping model adapted from Bartholomew and Horowitz (1991)*

		Model of self	
		(+) Positive (low)	(-) Negative (high)
Model of others	(+) Positive (low)	<b>Secure</b> (Safe with privacy and autonomy)	<b>Preoccupied</b> (Preoccupied by relationships)
	(-) Negative (high)	<b>Dismissing</b> (Avoids and denies the need of intimacy)	<b>Fearful</b> (Fears intimacy and has social avoidance)

**Figure 2.**

*PRISMA screening process*



## **Capítulo 7. Cuestionario de apego adulto: evidencias de validez en una muestra de hombres condenados por violencia contra su pareja**

Osa-Subtil I, Arias Astray A, Mateo Fernandez PV & de Dios-Duarte MJ (2024)

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### **Resumen del capítulo:**

Este estudio tiene como objetivo principal obtener evidencias de validez sobre el Cuestionario de Apego Adulto (CAA; Melero y Cantero, 2008) en una muestra de hombres condenados por un delito de violencia de género en España. Se trata de un instrumento diseñado para evaluar los estilos de apego en adultos y se estructura en cuatro subescalas (autoestima, necesidad de aprobación, autosuficiencia emocional y resolución hostil de conflictos). La combinación de estas subescalas proporciona los estilos de apego en forma de dimensiones latentes.

En este estudio participaron 331 hombres condenados para evaluar los estilos de apego en cuatro dimensiones: apego seguro, ansioso, evitativo y temeroso. Se realizó un análisis de las propiedades psicométricas de los ítems y de la fiabilidad de las escalas, se confirmó la estructura teórica de las escalas en esta muestra a través de un análisis factorial confirmatorio, además para obtener las dimensiones latentes de las cuatro categorías de apego se realizó un análisis de perfiles latentes.

### **Principales resultados:**

Los resultados del análisis factorial confirmatorio mostraron que, tras la eliminación de cuatro ítems, el cuestionario presentó un ajuste adecuado para evaluar los estilos de apego en esta muestra, con índices de ajuste mejorados (CFI = 0.942; RMSEA = 0.073). La fiabilidad fue adecuada para las subescalas baja autoestima, resolución hostil y expresión emocional, sin embargo, el nivel de consistencia interna fue bajo para la autosuficiencia emocional.

El análisis de perfiles latentes identificó con ajuste adecuado cuatro dimensiones latentes correspondientes al estilo de apego: 50.57% de los participantes presentaron apego seguro, 36.9% apego preocupado/ansioso, 8.57% apego temeroso, y 4.57% apego evitativo/despectivo.

### **Conclusiones:**

Este estudio proporciona evidencias de la adecuación del CAA para evaluar el constructo de apego en población de hombres condenados por violencia de género. La distribución observada de los estilos de apego evidencia unas prevalencias similares a la población general con respecto a la seguridad e inseguridad. Sin embargo, en este estudio, la prevalencia de apego ansioso fue mayor de lo esperado en comparación con la población general, mientras que la proporción de apego evitativo fue considerablemente menor



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# Adult Attachment Questionnaire: evidence of validity in a sample of IPVAW offenders

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**Introduction:** Adult attachment can be understood as a cognitive and emotional system concerning oneself and others, based on previous attachment experiences throughout life. This system automatically affects relationships with others. Because of its importance in the interpersonal domain, it has been studied on numerous occasions in research on intimate partner violence. The aim of this study was to obtain evidence of validity of the Adult Attachment Questionnaire (AAQ) in a sample of 331 men convicted of intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW).

**Methods:** The AAQ assesses adult attachment style in four dimensions that, together, yield four attachment categories. A psychometric analysis was performed, including reliability analysis and confirmatory factor analysis of the items, which ratified the factorial structure of the questionnaire. For a correct fit of the model, it was necessary to eliminate 4 of the items from the original scale.

**Results:** A latent profile analysis was also carried out, which identified four attachment styles: secure, preoccupied/anxious, avoidant/dismissing and fearful. Reliability indices were adequate. In general, the attachment profiles obtained ranges and means similar to those found in the general population study. The distribution of attachment styles was not equal: 50.57% of the participants presented secure attachment, 4.57% avoidant/dismissing attachment, 36.9% preoccupied/anxious, and 8.57% fearful.

**Discussion:** In conclusion, a valid and reliable instrument was determined based on the original AAQ scale to measure attachment in men convicted of IPVAV.

## KEYWORDS

IPVAW, attachment, evidence of validity, psychometric properties, questionnaire

## 1 Introduction

Adult attachment refers to the affective bond that is established between adults in the context of intimate relationships. It is an automatic response based on cognitive-emotional schemas that develop by virtue of attachment experiences with significant figures throughout life (Feeney and Noller, 1996; Feeney, 2002).

Adult attachment can be categorically classified by the combination of two dimensions with negative and positive poles: cognitive schemas about oneself (resulting in a spectrum between high and low relationship anxiety) and cognitive schemas about others (resulting in a spectrum between high and low relationship avoidance). The secure style is identified by having a positive mental model and confidence in oneself and others, high self-esteem, no serious interpersonal problems, and a desire for intimacy. Intimacy, that is, in which

the person feels comfortable (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991; Mikulincer and Horesh, 1999). In addition, these are individuals who maintain a balance between their affective needs and personal autonomy (Mayseless, 1996), which usually leads to fulfilling personal relationships. In contrast, in the fearful style a negative mental model of both self and others and low confidence in both cases prevails. These are individuals who frequently need the approval of other people, consider relationships as secondary to professional matters, and feel uncomfortable in intimate contexts (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991; Mayseless, 1996). In the avoidant/dismissing style the prevailing mental model of self is positive, but negative toward others (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991). This style is characterized by high emotional self-sufficiency and low activation of attachment needs. These individuals consider personal interactions as secondary to material matters and are very uncomfortable in intimate circumstances (Mayseless, 1996). Finally, people with a preoccupied/anxious affective style present a negative mental model of themselves but a positive model of others (Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991). Their self-esteem is low, they present high activation of the attachment system and dependency behaviors. These subjects show a constant need for approval and an excessive preoccupation with social interactions.

The categorical paradigm for understanding attachment theory has disadvantages compared to the dimensional one (Fearon and Roisman, 2017). Categorical measurement assumes that there are a limited number of attachment types and that these fit into a taxonomic system. It appears that dimensional measures fit the data better and have more predictive power over other variables. However, this drawback can be addressed by understanding that categorical and dimensional measures capture different aspects of attachment: the overall strategy and the relative strength of attachment behavioral systems, with the categorical perspective being an indicator of the predominant strategy of the subject (Cowan and Cowan, 2007).

Several scales have been developed to assess attachment style in the general population. Among the best known are the Relationship Questionnaire (RQ; Bartholomew and Horowitz, 1991) and the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale (ECR; Brennan et al., 1998 adapted to Spanish by Alonso-arbiol et al., 2007). The RQ consists of choosing one of the four paragraphs that represent the four attachment styles: secure, fearful, preoccupied/anxious and avoidant/dismissing. It is a 36-item questionnaire (where responses range from 1: strongly disagree to 7: strongly agree) that measures two dimensions of insecurity: avoidance and anxiety. Based on these scales, a questionnaire was developed to assess attachment style in the Spanish context: the Adult Attachment Questionnaire (AAQ; Cuestionario de Apego Adulto in Spanish). This questionnaire was created by Melero and Cantero (2008), in order to supplement the Relationship Questionnaire with a dimensional measure of attachment. This measure is based on theoretical constructs derived from qualitative research on the characteristics of the different styles. The AAQ consists of 40 items that are grouped into four subscales, measuring aspects such as self-concept, trust in others, need for approval, independence/autonomy/self-sufficiency, viewing relationships as secondary concerns, expression of

feelings, discomfort with intimacy, conflict resolution strategies, dissatisfaction in relationships, achievement orientation vs. personal orientation, fear of relationships, and interpersonal problems. From the scores obtained in the four subscales, the prevailing attachment style in the subject is estimated, according to the Relationship Questionnaire.

Given the relational nature of attachment style, it impacts the romantic sphere as it determines our expectations, needs and behaviors in love (Simpson et al., 2007). It has also been related to relationship satisfaction, health, and wellbeing (Leak and Cooney, 2001). In addition, the way we bond influences communication patterns and the adaptive or maladaptive conflict resolution strategies used (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2011; Paquette et al., 2020). Consequently, it is of great interest to know attachment style when analyzing interpersonal violence. Attachment style gives rise to functional or dysfunctional expression of anger, domestic and intimate partner violence, criminal and antisocial behavior, and even intergroup violence (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2011).

Thus, partner violence, explained from the attachment point of view, is understood as an exaggerated response to the perception of a partner's hurtful behavior (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2007). It involves the concentration of behaviors aimed at avoiding relationship breakdown (Dutton et al., 1994; Bartholomew and Allison, 2006). Thus, the affective style of secure attachment is related to a greater use of prosocial skills (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2011). In contrast, people with insecure attachment tend to have problems in their intimate relationships, such as being sad, angry, jealous, and hostile toward their partners (Dutton et al., 1994). Affective attachment style is a risk variable that, in interaction with others, predicts different forms and degrees of intensity of intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW) (de la Osa et al., 2022).

Given that validity evidence is limited to scores obtained for a specific use and under specific conditions (Messick, 1993), it cannot be assumed that an instrument that has been validated in a general or clinical population is equally valid for specific populations such as convicted men, which presents very specific characteristics and needs. It is essential to be aware of the psychometric properties of instruments that are used in investigations or evaluations related to the legal context (Kennedy et al., 2019).

## 1.1 Aims

The aim of this study was to identify different evidence of validity of the AAQ in men convicted of IPVAW in Spain. To this end, the following specific objectives were proposed: (a) to determine the psychometric properties of the items that make up the questionnaire, (b) to check whether the structure of the questionnaire for the general population coincides with the structure for measuring the construct of abusers, (c) to determine the reliability of its four subscales, and (d) to confirm whether the combination of the subscales generates groupings theoretically compatible with attachment styles.

## 2 Methods

### 2.1 Participants and procedure

This study involved 331 men, convicted of an IPVAW crime in Spain, who were serving an alternate or suspended sentence or were incarcerated. The age range of the participants was between 19 and 72 years ( $M = 39.8$ ,  $SD = 11.2$ ). The 76.6% of participants were European, with 70% of the total sample being Spanish, 18% Latin American, 4.3% African, and 1.1% Asian. Some 28.4% of the participants had primary education, 53.0% had secondary education, 12.5% had university studies, and 6.1% had no studies. Twenty-two percentage of the participants considered themselves to be of low socioeconomic class, 59.2% middle class, 10.9% upper middle class, and 5.5% high class.

The exclusion criteria established in this study were: having served the sentence, not having been previously convicted, being a minor, and not knowing how to read or not understanding Spanish correctly. It was no necessary to exclude any participant.

The sampling procedure used to select participants was based on a non-probabilistic convenience approach. The design of this study was observational, analytical, prospective and cross-sectional. The evaluation protocol was implemented during the presentation sessions of an intervention programme aimed at men convicted of gender violence, pursuant to Organic Law 1/2004 on Comprehensive Protection Measures against Gender Violence. Before completing the questionnaires, the participants received information about the study verbally, as well as an information sheet and an informed consent form that they had to sign in order to participate. Participation in this study was voluntary and disinterested.

This study obtained a favorable report from the ethics committee of the Faculty of Psychology of the Complutense University and authorization from the General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions of Spain.

### 2.2 Instruments

#### 2.2.1 Sociodemographic questionnaire

A questionnaire was created *ad-hoc* to assess the sociodemographic and personal characteristics of the participants, including age, nationality, and level of education.

#### 2.2.2 Adult Attachment Questionnaire (AAQ)

The Adult Attachment Questionnaire (AAQ; [Melero and Cantero, 2008](#)) consists of 40 Likert-type items (1–6) that assess different dimensions of attachment in adults. These items are part of a latent structure of four factors that, grouped together, give rise to the theorized attachment styles, both bidimensional (secure and insecure) and categorical (secure, preoccupied, fearful, avoidant). The subscales are: subscale 1: low self-esteem, need for approval and fear of rejection; subscale 2: hostile conflict resolution, resentment and possessiveness; subscale 3: expression of feelings and comfort with relationships; subscale 4: emotional self-sufficiency and discomfort with intimacy.

The questionnaire presented adequate internal consistency in the first three subscales ( $\alpha_{\text{scale1}} = 0.86$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{scale2}} = 0.80$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{scale3}} = 0.77$ ), but not in the fourth ( $\alpha_{\text{scale4}} = 0.68$ ).

Content validity was ensured through the selection and review of items by experts in the field of attachment, guaranteeing that the questionnaire accurately reflected the theoretical dimensions of adult attachment. To gather evidence about the construct, an exploratory factor analysis (orthogonal rotation), a reliability analysis with Cronbach's  $\alpha$  test and a K-Means cluster analysis were performed. These analyses have shown that the questionnaire items are grouped according to the theoretical dimensions of adult attachment, thus confirming the construct validity of the instrument.

### 2.3 Analysis

RStudio 4.2.3 was used to analyse the data. Descriptive analyses were performed to characterize the sample. A descriptive analysis of the items was performed and their discrimination index was calculated. The internal consistency of each of the AAQ's four subscales was evaluated using the Omega McDonald coefficient ( $\omega$ ) and confidence intervals ([Viladrich et al., 2017](#)). Acceptable ( $>0.70$ ), good ( $>0.80$ ), and excellent ( $>0.90$ ) results were obtained ([Taber, 2018](#)). The four-factor model was then tested using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). The Unweighted Least Squares (ULS) estimator was chosen. This parameter estimator is recommended for categorical variables, does not require a specific distribution, is suitable for small samples,  $n = 200$  ([Muthén, 1983](#); [Batista-Foguet and Coenders, 2000](#); [Brown, 2015](#)), and obtains better results with ordinal data than the Maximum Likelihood Estimator ([Li, 2016](#)) and Diagonally Weighted Least Square ([Forero et al., 2009](#)). The analyses were based on the polychoric correlation matrix. Items that presented factor saturations lower than 0.4 were eliminated ([Byrne, 2013](#)). The scale was evaluated using the goodness of fit indices ([Hooper et al., 2008](#)): Comparative Fix Index  $>0.90$  ([Bentler, 1990](#)) and Tucker Lewis Index  $>0.90$  (TLI, [Tucker and Lewis, 1973](#)), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation  $\leq 0.08$  (RMSEA, [Steiger, 1990](#)): Good fit  $\leq 0.05$ , acceptable fit between 0.05 and 0.08; and Standardized Root Mean Residual (SRMR, [Fan and Sivo, 2007](#)): Good fit  $\leq 0.05$ , acceptable fit between 0.05 and 0.08.

A latent profile analysis (LPA) with the packages "mclust" and "lpa" was used to determine the number of existing groups according to the four subscales of the AAQ. Class selection criteria were based on model fit. The fit was assessed by reviewing the variations in entropy, considering that the lower this data, the less clear the separation between groups, the minimum acceptable being 0.70 ([Lanza and Cooper, 2016](#)). The decline in the Log Likelihood Logarithm (LogLik), the Akaike Information Criterion (AIC; [Akaike, 1987](#)), the Bayesian Information Criterion (BIC; [Schwarz, 1978](#)) and the BIC adjusted to the sample size were also assessed, the last three being acceptable from a value of 0.90. Subsequently, the interpretability criterion was taken into account, given that the profile solution must make theoretical sense to be useful ([Muthén and Muthén, 2000](#)). Finally, an analysis of variance was performed to determine the differences between the profiles

obtained and the four subscales of the AAQ and thus determine which of the profiles corresponds to the attachment styles.

## 2.4 Results

### 2.4.1 Confirmatory factor analysis

First, a model was estimated using all of the items (see Table 1) and with the structure proposed by Melero and Cantero (2008). A total of 269 parameters were estimated with 736 degrees of freedom, data that indicate that it is correctly identified. The metric for items 7, 14, 27, and 28 was set to 1 since they were the most saturated and were statistically significant (see Table 2). The model results showed a moderately adequate (unsatisfactory) 4-factor model fit [CFI = 0.887; TLI = 0.880; RMSEA = 0.093 [0.090; 0.097]; and SRMR = 0.101]. The study of factor saturations showed four items that saturated below 0.40. Item 21 (“*I am self-confident*”) of subscale 1, items 11 (“*I have trouble asking personal questions*”) and 35 (“*I am a person who prefers solitude to social relationships*”) of subscale 3, and item 25 of subscale 4 (“*I prefer stable relationships to sporadic partners*”). Once these four items were removed, a properly identified model (see Figure 1) with 258 parameters and 659 degrees of freedom was obtained. The fit indices improved, thus becoming acceptable [CFI = 0.942; TLI = 0.938; RMSEA = 0.073 [0.069; 0.077]; and SRMR = 0.085].

Regarding internal consistency, the  $\omega$  values were 0.835 for subscale 1, 0.806 for subscale 2, 0.752 for subscale 3, and 0.641 for subscale 4. In the model with the 4 items eliminated, better reliability values were obtained (subscale 1 = 0.847, subscale 2 = 0.806, subscale 3 = 0.782, subscale 4 = 0.665), obtaining good values of internal consistency in subscales 1 and 2, and an acceptable value in subscale 3. The value of subscale 4 did not indicate acceptability.

### 2.4.2 Latent profile analysis

Six latent profile analysis (LPA) models were estimated with solutions from 1 to 6 profiles. As found by the authors who constructed the original scale, both a 2-profile solution and a 4-profile solution were reasonable choices based on fit indices (see Table 2) and conceptual validity. Six latent profile analysis models were compared using entropy, BIC, sample-adjusted BIC (SABIC), AIC, and LogLik.

Specifically, the 4-profile model was chosen, which obtained generally low values in the fit indices (LogLik = -4,673 BIC = 9,482, SABIC = 9,409, AIC = 9,349) compared to the more and less class models. Furthermore, an acceptable entropy (0.819) was obtained, indicating a clear separation between the groups. Taking into account this decrease in the indices and the theoretical criteria, the membership of each subject to the four profiles was saved to later determine if they coincided with the attachment styles.

### 2.4.3 Analysis of variance

An analysis of variance was performed to determine the mean scores of each profile in each of the subscales and compared with the results obtained by Melero and Cantero (2008). Subsequently, the attachment style corresponding to each profile was determined.

The results showed significant differences in the four groups. The profile 1 (see Figure 2), was composed of 50.57% of the sample. This profile showed a secure attachment style, with higher mean scores on subscale 3 ( $M_{Scale3} = 44.15$ ,  $SD_{Scale3} = 6.27$ ,  $Range_{Scale3} = 9-54$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and lower mean scores on the other subscales ( $M_{Scale1} = 22.19$ ,  $M_{Scale2} = 18.30$ ,  $M_{Scale3} = 9.81$ ), coinciding with the results of the original study ( $M = 40.07$ ,  $Range = 14-54$ ;  $M_{Scale1} = 28.94$ ,  $M_{Scale2} = 22.34$ ,  $M_{Scale4} = 13.99$ ). Profile 2 comprised 36.29% of the sample. In this case the attachment style was preoccupied, with a high mean score in subscale 1 ( $M_{Scale1} = 34.14$ ,  $SD_{Scale1} = 8.80$ ,  $Range_{Scale1} = 12-43$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and moderate mean scores in the other subscales ( $M_{Scale2} = 26.79$ ,  $M_{Scale3} = 36.86$ ,  $M_{Scale4} = 16.33$ ). These data were lower than those obtained in the general population ( $M_{Scale1} = 49.15$ ,  $Range_{Scale1} = 15-77$ ;  $M_{Scale2} = 28.17$ ,  $M_{Scale3} = 40.40$ ,  $M_{Scale4} = 17.97$ ). Profile 4 consisted of 8.57% of the sample. Correspondence with fearful/hostile attachment was determined, with high mean scores on all subscales ( $M_{Scale1} = 47.47$ ,  $SD_{Scale1} = 8.97$ ,  $Range_{Scale1} = 26-53$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ;  $M_{Scale2} = 40.13$ ,  $SD_{Scale2} = 8.72$ ;  $M_{Scale3} = 40.40$ ,  $SD_{Scale3} = 6.55$ ;  $M_{Scale4} = 21.87$ ,  $SD_{Scale4} = 4.73$ ). Similarity to the original study was observed through the maximum variation of 5 points on subscale 3 ( $M_{Scale1} = 52$ ,  $M_{Scale2} = 44.73$ ,  $M_{Scale3} = 35.51$ ,  $M_{Scale4} = 18.41$ ). Finally, profile 3 appeared to be the avoidant attachment style, with 4.57% of the sample and a medium-high score on subscale 4 compared to the responses of the other participants ( $M_{Scale4} = 7.87$ ,  $SD_{Scale4} = 4.73$ ,  $Range_{Scale4} = 13-30$ ,  $p < 0.01$ ) and low/moderate mean scores on the other subscales ( $M_{Scale1} = 13.38$ ,  $M_{Scale2} = 12.00$ ,  $M_{Scale3} = 18.63$ ). These results demonstrate a similar score on subscale 4 to those obtained in the general population but differ in scores on the rest of the subscales ( $M_{Scale1} = 35.73$ ,  $M_{Scale2} = 32.70$ ,  $M_{Scale3} = 38.29$ ,  $M_{Scale4} = 18.73$ ).

## 3 Discussion

The adult attachment style is shaped by a series of cognitive-emotional schemas developed from the bonds that are established throughout life (Feeney and Noller, 1996). Given its influence on intimate relationships, attachment has been extensively studied in research on interpersonal violence. Both research findings and those derived from psychological assessment in the forensic setting play a critical role in the legal decision-making process. Thus, it is important to ensure that the instruments used to measure attachment style are appropriate and provide accurate results and adequate identification of the construct.

The aim of this study was to obtain evidence of validity of the Adult Attachment Scale of Melero and Cantero (2008) in a population of gender-based perpetrators of intimate partner violence. In general, the scale showed adequate psychometric properties to specifically measure the attachment construct in a sample of men convicted of a gender violence crime (IPVAW): good structural validity and internal consistency were confirmed, as well as the formation of profiles that matched attachment styles from the factors of the questionnaire.

Reliability values were adequate, except for the subscale of emotional self-sufficiency and discomfort with intimacy (0.665). The value of the Cronbach's alpha in the original scale was also close

TABLE 1 Psychometric properties of the items.

Item	M	SD	DI	Sk	Ku
<b>Scale 1: low self-esteem, need for approval and fear of rejection</b>					
3	2.37	1.69	0.550	0.9106	-0.5389
8	1.96	1.51	0.414	1.5117	1.1081
10	2.17	1.59	0.473	1.1354	0.0460
12	3.05	1.77	0.508	0.2676	-1.2647
14	1.82	1.37	0.619	1.6511	1.6763
18	2.44	1.57	0.579	0.7166	-0.6941
21	2.45	1.74	0.064	0.9699	-0.4661
23	2.04	1.43	0.485	1.3052	0.6578
26	2.33	1.59	0.547	0.9426	-0.3087
30	3.67	1.78	0.394	-0.1682	-1.2436
34	1.85	1.42	0.523	1.6672	1.7139
37	2.29	1.64	0.521	0.9583	-0.4251
39	2.53	1.65	0.526	0.7041	-0.7696
<b>Scale 2: hostile conflict resolution, resentment, and possessiveness</b>					
2	2.57	1.57	0.377	0.7120	-0.5610
4	1.92	1.45	0.508	1.4900	1.0962
7	1.80	1.16	0.594	1.5004	1.6823
9	2.57	1.65	0.395	0.6228	-0.8665
13	2.00	1.58	0.386	1.4750	0.8794
17	2.46	1.52	0.434	0.6970	-0.6121
20	2.36	1.45	0.411	0.8233	-0.2475
24	1.89	1.36	0.567	1.6003	1.6831
29	1.82	1.21	0.521	1.5547	1.8296
31	2.25	1.57	0.441	1.0584	-0.0953
36	1.41	1.02	0.429	9.3376	3.0373
<b>Scale 3: expression of feelings and comfort with relationships</b>					
1	4.44	1.55	0.342	-0.8381	-0.2811
5	4.06	1.71	0.421	-0.5852	-0.8200
11	4.45	1.81	0.234	-0.7670	-0.8597
16	4.31	1.69	0.489	-0.7895	-0.5785
27	4.86	1.44	0.550	-1.3364	1.0323
32	4.69	1.57	0.422	-1.1031	0.1242
35	4.35	1.62	0.218	-0.6824	-0.9761
38	4.36	1.62	0.518	-0.7379	-0.5311
40	4.49	1.51	0.544	-1.0004	0.1961
<b>Scale 4: emotional self-sufficiency and discomfort with intimacy</b>					
6	1.86	1.43	0.374	1.6608	2.1937
15	3.22	1.81	0.254	0.0817	-1.3648
19	2.36	1.56	0.415	0.8308	-0.4840
22	1.82	1.27	0.413	1.8265	2.3200
25	2.71	1.93	0.107	0.6725	-1.1168
28	2.11	1.50	0.381	1.0936	-0.0349
33	1.73	1.35	0.396	1.8265	2.3200

M, mean; SD, standard deviation; DI, discrimination index based on item-test correlation; Sk, Skewness; Ku, Kurtosis.



3.03. A higher value was observed for item 36 ( $Sk = 9.33$ ), indicating that there are extremely high values in the distribution, or that the data distribution is skewed to the right in an extreme way.

The combination of the subscales showed the expected attachment style results. The distribution of the four subscales of the questionnaire in the different combinations of profiles performed in ranges and mean values compatible with the original scale in the general population. This data indicates that attachment style is measured with the same dimensions with this population as with the original sample, showing adequate psychometric properties to do so. However, in the 4-subscale model, four of the 40 items did not work correctly in this sample and were eliminated. First, item 21 (“*I have confidence in myself*”) was eliminated. This item was part of the scale “Low self-esteem, need for approval and fear of rejection” and differed from the rest in that it seemed to measure self-concept from the perspective of the *self* and the others from the external perspective. Self-esteem refers to the evaluation and perception that a person has of himself/herself. It is the subjective assessment of one’s own value, competence, and worth as an individual. Self-esteem and fear of rejection are significantly related. It is understood that low self-esteem can make a person feel insecure about his or her worth and fear being rejected or not being accepted by others (Van Tuinen and Ramanaiah, 1979). The results obtained are striking, since other known self-esteem scales, such as Rosenberg’s (1965), include appraisals and perceptions about oneself. This difference could be due to the fact that, in the sample studied here, this scale could measure self-esteem as the perception of how we are accepted or rejected by others in our social environment, in line with the postulates of sociometric theory. According to this theory, social interactions and relationships with others play an important role in the formation and maintenance of self-esteem (Leary and Baumeister, 2000). Secondly, something similar happens with items 11 (“*I have trouble asking personal questions*”) and 35 (“*I am a person who prefers solitude to social relationships*”), designed to measure “Emotional expression and confidence in relationships.” It is important to note that these are the only items in the subscale that consider self-perception. Finally, item 25 (“*I prefer stable relationships to sporadic partners*”) was eliminated because it did not adequately capture the factor most linked to avoidance: “Emotional self-sufficiency and discomfort with intimacy.” People with avoidant/dismissing attachment style tend to have difficulty establishing and maintaining close, intimate relationships. They often have a fear of intimacy and tend to avoid emotional dependence in relationships (Edelstein and Shaver, 2004). However, this does not necessarily mean that they prefer sporadic relationships. A study on monogamous relationships (Moors et al., 2015) found that people with an avoidant/dismissing attachment style had more positive attitudes toward consensual non-monogamous relationships and were more willing to engage in them compared to monogamous relationships. However, these individuals were more likely to be involved in monogamous relationships in practice.

Regarding the distribution of attachment style, the results were inconsistent with those obtained in the study of the general population. In our study, 50.57% of the participants showed secure attachment, 4.57% showed avoidant/dismissing attachment, 36.9% showed preoccupied/anxious attachment, and

8.57% showed fearful attachment. In contrast, results from the general Spanish population found a more equal distribution of attachment styles, where 28.54% of subjects were secure, 29.66% avoidant, 26.07% preoccupied, and 15.17% fearful. However, a meta-analysis by Van Ijzendoorn et al. (1999) examined 33 studies on attachment styles based on the Adult Attachment Interview and concluded that the global frequency of the three main attachment styles was as follows: 58% secure, 24% avoidant/dismissing, and 18% preoccupied/anxious. Anxious attachment peculiarities can escalate to hostile masculinity, an issue that increases the likelihood of perpetration in men (Barbaro et al., 2019). The data indicate that the ratio between secure and insecure attachment individuals is equal. However, in the sample studied here, insecure male are mainly anxious. This is not in line with other studies that have evaluated attachment style in perpetrators and have found a greater presence of avoidant attachment among insecure individuals (Lawson and Brossart, 2013). Therefore, it is difficult to establish a predominance of insecure attachment styles in male abusers in the case of our work.

### 3.1 Limitations and future directions

First, the type of sampling used in this investigation could influence the fact that the data collected are not representative of the total population of male perpetrators, the distribution of attachment style was particularly unequal, and does not seem to coincide with the distribution of other studies with the same population. This may indicate a problem of population representativeness or response bias. Second, and related to the previous limitation, the use of self-reporting may introduce response biases, as participants may not be completely honest or accurate in reporting their behaviors and attitudes. In this case, participants are incarcerated and social desirability may be especially present. Third, the reliability of scale 4 fell short of adequate, indicating little consistency in the measurement of avoidance. Fourth, it would be interesting to obtain other validity evidence such as that based on other variables or to perform an invariance analysis.

This work offers an instrument with adequate properties to measure attachment in this population, thus increasing knowledge in this field. In addition, it can guide and specify treatment and prevention components in IPVAW. For future research it will be important to carry out additional studies that provide additional evidence of validity of the original scale in samples of abusers, obtaining convergent, discriminant, predictive or criterion information. These studies would allow us to deepen our understanding of the adult attachment construct and its relevance and peculiarities in this population.

### Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

## Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by Deontological Commission of the Faculty of Psychology of the Complutense University of Madrid. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

## Author contributions

IO-S: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Validation, Visualization, Writing—original draft, Writing—review & editing. AA: Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Project administration, Resources, Supervision, Writing—original draft, Writing—review & editing. PM: Investigation, Resources, Writing—original draft, Writing—review & editing. MD-D: Conceptualization, Supervision, Writing—original draft, Writing—review & editing.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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## **Capítulo 8. Estilo de apego inseguro y maltrato infantil: relación con la agresión en hombres condenados por violencia de pareja**

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### **Resumen del capítulo**

Este estudio examina cómo los estilos de apego junto con las experiencias de abuso infantil afectan la agresión en adultos entre hombres condenados por violencia de pareja.

El estudio incluyó a 265 hombres condenados por un delito de violencia de género, evaluando cómo el apego inseguro y las experiencias de abuso parental en la infancia influyen en la manifestación de la violencia en la vida adulta. El análisis utilizó el Cuestionario de Apego Adulto (CAA) y el Cuestionario de Agresión de Buss y Perry para investigar estas relaciones.

### **Principales resultados:**

Los estilos de apego inseguros (particularmente el apego temeroso) fueron predictores significativos de la agresión en esta población, destacándose un aumento en los comportamientos violentos en comparación con el apego seguro. Por su parte, el apego seguro se caracteriza como un factor protector que reduce la agresión.

El abuso por parte del padre (físico y psicológico) se asoció con un aumento significativo de la agresión en los agresores, mientras que el abuso por parte de la madre no fue significativo en este estudio

**Conclusiones:**

Este estudio concluye que los estilos de apego adulto inseguros, en especial el temeroso, están directamente relacionados con un aumento en la agresión en la edad adulta en hombres condenados por violencia de género. Asimismo, el apego seguro se reafirma como un elemento clave para reducir la agresión, destacando la importancia de intervenciones que promuevan el desarrollo de vínculos de seguridad. Además, las experiencias de maltrato infantil, especialmente por parte del padre, juegan un papel importante en la predisposición a la violencia, aunque no de forma determinante.

Original

## Insecure attachment style and child maltreatment: relations to aggression in men convicted of intimate partner violence

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## A B S T R A C T

Child abuse is not only a serious violation of children's rights and well-being, but also the worst example of how to relate and bond with others. Violence against an intimate partner during adulthood may have as background the emotional experiences and early learning associated with parents as the most significant developmental figures. The study of men who have been convicted of crimes of domestic violence against women may shed light on how childhood experiences impact aggressive adult behavior. Accordingly, this research explores the relationships between attachment style, childhood parental abuse experiences and aggression in adult life in a sample of men convicted of intimate partner violence (N=265). This was carried out using the Spanish version of the Buss and Perry Aggression Questionnaire and the Melero and Cantero Adult Attachment Questionnaire. After the cleaning and analysis of the data by means of k-means cluster analysis, ANOVA and multiple hierarchical linear regression, it becomes clear that the fact of having been a victim of childhood abuse among this type of men, although it constitutes a risk factor for violent behavior in adult life, does not determine it. Something similar could be said about the different attachment styles, with secure types functioning as a protective factor and insecure types being associated to a greater extent and with different forms of violence.

### Estilo de apego inseguro y maltrato infantil: su relación con la agresión en hombres condenados por violencia contra sus parejas

## R E S U M E N

El maltrato infantil no es sólo una grave violación de los derechos y el bienestar de niños y niñas, sino también el peor ejemplo de cómo relacionarse y establecer vínculos con los demás. La violencia contra pareja durante la edad adulta puede tener como trasfondo experiencias emocionales y aprendizajes tempranos asociados con los padres como figuras más significativas del desarrollo. El estudio de los hombres que han sido condenados por delitos de violencia contra las mujeres puede arrojar luz sobre cómo las experiencias de la infancia influyen en el comportamiento agresivo de los adultos. En consecuencia, esta investigación explora las relaciones entre el estilo de apego, las experiencias de maltrato en la infancia por parte de las y los progenitores y la agresividad en la vida adulta en una muestra de hombres condenados por violencia contra su pareja (N=265). Tras la depuración y análisis de los datos mediante análisis de conglomerados, ANOVA y regresión jerárquica lineal múltiple, se pone de manifiesto que el hecho de haber sido víctima de maltrato en la infancia entre este tipo de hombres, aunque constituye un factor de riesgo para la conducta violenta en la vida adulta, no la determina. Algo similar podría decirse de los diferentes estilos de apego, funcionando los seguros como factor protector y los inseguros en mayor medida y con diferentes formas de violencia.

## Palabras clave:

Apego

Transmisión intergeneracional de la violencia

Hombres maltratadores

Violencia de pareja

Agresión

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The phenomenon of intimate partner violence (IPV) is highly complex. From an ecological perspective which integrates individual, relational, community and structural variables (Heise, 1998), the study of batterers is key to its understanding. Male batterers are not a homogeneous group (Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994), so different typologies have been proposed. These have considered, among others, individual variables of the affective domain (Dutton, 2006, 2007; Holtzworth-Munroe & Meehan, 2004; Holtzworth-Munroe & Stuart, 1994; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 2000).

Attachment theory (Bowlby 1973, 1986) maintains, on the one hand, that humans are biologically prepared to approach others in search of protection and security. On the other hand, it defines the attachment system as an organized set of relatively stable behaviors whose function is to maintain proximity to the caregiver. It is a system that maintains a balance between proximity and exploratory behaviors, depending on the existing dangers in the environment and the ease of access to the attachment figure.

In adulthood, depending on early bonding experiences and throughout the life cycle, a series of cognitive-emotional schemas about oneself and others operate. These schemas function as internal operating models, interfere in the perception of social interactions and, therefore, in relationships with others (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Bretherton, 1985; Feeney & Noller, 1996; Melero & Cantero, 2008).

Operational models correspond to behavioral patterns that combine anxiety and avoidance dimensions. These, in turn, can show positive and negative polarity. Thus, four categories of attachment are established: secure, preoccupied, dismissing and fearful (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991). People with a secure attachment have a positive model of themselves and others (low anxiety and low avoidance) and are comfortable both in solitude and in establishing intimate relationships. Those who develop a preoccupied attachment style (high anxiety and low avoidance) maintain a negative self-image and a positive image of others, with great concern for their relationships and a constant need for approval and a fear of abandonment. They depend on others to maintain a positive self-concept and try to achieve it through control. The dismissing style (high avoidance and low anxiety) characterizes those people who have a positive self-image and a negative image of others. They tend to avoid and deny the need for intimacy and to take their self-sufficiency to an extreme. Finally, people with fearful attachment (high anxiety and avoidance) maintain a negative model of both themselves and others, on whom they are highly dependent. At the same time, they are reserved about intimacy for fear of rejection.

There appears to be a relationship between insecure attachment and the use of general violence, while secure attachment is related to a decrease in violence (Ogilvie et al. 2014), as well as to the use of prosocial behavior (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2011). In addition, insecure attachment has been linked to increased likelihood of intimate partner aggression (Oka et al., 2014).

Lawson and Brossart (2009) found that anxious attachment styles (which would include preoccupied and fearful) are good predictors of psychological and mild physical aggression. Meanwhile, avoidant styles (dismissing and fearful) are good predictors of violence, both mild and severe, as well as sexual coercion (Babcock et al., 2000; Barbaro & Shackelford, 2019; Péloquin et al., 2011).

Among people with high attachment anxiety, fearful attachment aggressors would be those who have received more abuse and rejection in past attachments and would show a greater propensity to respond by assaulting their partner when experiencing abandonment when they are not available (Dutton, 1995; Dutton et al., 1994). Fearful attachment has also been related to Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart's (1994) borderline typology.

At present, the scientific literature offers inconsistent results on the relationship between avoidant attachment style and aggression. Following the classification of batterers by Waltz et al. (2000), the types generally considered violent were characterized by showing avoidant attachment, antisocial and narcissistic traits, and instrumental use of violence. Genest and Mathieu (2014), in a study with intimate partner aggressors, found that avoidant styles are the ones that contribute most to the manifestation of anger. For their part, Mauricio and López (2009) found that avoidant individuals were those who best fit the typology of severe violence. However, other studies have not found significant associations between an avoidant style and aggression (Barbaro et al., 2019; Péloquin et al., 2011; Velotti et al., 2020).

It would seem that batterers with avoidant traits do not need to control their partners (Sonkin et al. 2019). This would be consistent with the so-called demand-withdrawn phenomenon (Christensen & Heavey 1990; Dumas et al., 2008). This refers to the pairing between a man with avoidant attachment and a woman with anxious attachment (Bond & Bond, 2004). The person with anxious attachment is more committed to the relationship and hyperactivates the attachment system to avoid abandonment. On the other hand, the person with avoidant attachment disengages in order to maintain distance when perceiving that their partner is not available. Thus, avoidant persons, due to their need for distance, may feel pressured by their partner when they are asked to remain committed to the relationship.

Despite its relative stability, attachment style is amenable to be modified. A change in attachment style could improve interactions in intimate relationships (Lawson et al., 2006; Olufowote et al., 2020). Regarding the second issue that concerns us, linked to the intergenerational transmission of violence, it is evident that relationships with significant figures in childhood have a significant impact throughout the life cycle (Thornberry et al., 2003). Thus, it is argued that children who have grown up in violent homes are more likely to develop an aggressive interpersonal style in their adult relationships (Franklin & Kercher, 2012).

These assumptions can be based on social learning theories, understanding that children learn by modeling from their parents (Rosenbaum & O'Leary, 1981). It is also possible to sustain these ideas by appealing to attachment theory, understanding that an insecure relationship of minors with their parents puts them at risk of developing anxious, fearful or avoidant bonds in their romantic relationships in the future, which would be at the heart of their violent relationship patterns (Egeland et al., 1988; González-Méndez et al., 2017). At this point, it is worth alluding to the evolutionary-contextual model of Capaldi and Gorman-Smith (2003), since, in addition to integrating individual variables (development, temperament, learning history, etc.) with others of an environmental nature, it stresses the importance of parental behavior (coercive parenting or lack of supervision) in relation to future behavior. Individual idiosyncrasies in interaction with other contextual experiences could favor or inhibit the intergenerational transmission of the use of intimate partner violence in adulthood (Tea et al., 2021).

The complexity of the interplay between environmental, relational and individual risk and protective factors may account for the inconsistencies observed in the current literature on the relationship between attachment type and violence in adult intimate partner relationships and on the intergenerational transmission of violence. While some papers find that suffering or witnessing abuse in childhood has a slight relationship with perpetration of violence in adulthood when it comes to men (Hughes & Cossar, 2016; Smith et al., 2015; Tea et al., 2021), others only find this relationship exists for women (Knight et al., 2016; Shakoob et al., 2020), or a stronger relationship in women than in men (Cui et al., 2010; Toplul-Dermatas

& Hatipoğlu-Sümer, 2021). Neepl et al. (2019) indicate that the transmission of violence may not only contribute to perpetuating coercive parenting but remains over time, causing aggression also in the partner both in late adolescence and adulthood.

Considering the above, this paper studies a group of men who have been convicted of a gender violence offense with the aim of finding out whether different attachment styles (secure and insecure - preoccupied, rejecting and fearful) and having been abused by the father and/or mother are adequate predictors of aggression in adult life.

Insecure attachment styles and parental abuse are expected to be significant predictors of aggression. In particular, high anxiety attachment styles (fearful and preoccupied).

## Method

### Participants and procedure

This study involved 265 men who were in the first session of an intervention program for men convicted of gender-based violence in the Region of Madrid, Spain. They were in a situation of probation or an alternative measure to prison. From the initial total number of cases, those who did not respond adequately to the psychometric tests were excluded. Thus, the final valid number of participants totaled 176. Their ages ranged from 20 to 80 years ( $M=39.34$ ,  $SD=10.88$ ). 69.4% were Spanish and the remaining 30.6% were foreigners (8% Europeans, 1.3% Asians, 5.9% Africans and 13.9% Latin Americans). The project obtained a favorable report from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Psychology of the Complutense University of Madrid and authorization from the General Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions. The sampling was by convenience. It was the psychologists and those responsible for the Social Insertion Centers who allowed access to survey the participants in their first session of the programs. The participants were verbally informed of the characteristics of the research and were also provided with an information sheet and an informed consent form to sign regarding their participation. They then answered the questionnaires individually. The participants did not receive any compensation for participating in the study.

### Instruments

The information was collected through a questionnaire that included a section on sociodemographic data created for this purpose, a series of questions on whether the participant had suffered physical and psychological abuse by his father and/or mother, and the psychometric tests mentioned below:

From the sum of the dichotomous items ("Yes/No") measuring child maltreatment two variables were created indicating whether respondents had been victims of physical or psychological violence by the father or mother.

*Aggression Questionnaire* (AQ, Buss & Perry, 1992, Spanish version by Andreu et al., 2002)

This is composed of 29 items related to aggressive behavior and feelings. They are answered on a Likert-type scale with five response options, ranging from completely false for me to completely true for me). For this study, it presents good overall reliability measured by Cronbach's Alpha coefficient ( $\alpha=0.88$ ), as well as good or sufficient reliability for each of the four subscales of which it consists of: physical aggressiveness ( $\alpha=0.86$ ); verbal aggressiveness ( $\alpha=0.68$ ), anger ( $\alpha=0.77$ ) and hostility ( $\alpha=0.72$ ).

Internal consistency indices for this sample were  $\omega=0.852$  for physical aggressiveness,  $\omega=0.736$  for verbal aggressiveness,  $\omega=0.814$  for irascibility and  $\omega=0.765$  for hostility.

*Adult Attachment Questionnaire* (CAA, Melero & Cantero, 2008)

This instrument consists of 40 items integrated in four scales: Scale 1: low self-esteem, need for approval and fear of rejection; Scale 2: hostile conflict resolution, resentment and possessiveness; Scale 3: expression of feelings and comfort with relationships; Scale 4: emotional self-sufficiency and discomfort with intimacy. The instrument uses a 6-point Likert scale, with 1 being completely agree and 6 being completely disagree. Depending on how these scales are combined, subjects can be classified into two clusters (secure or insecure) or four clusters (worried, distant, fearful-hostile or secure). Its internal consistency ranges from 0.68 to 0.86. In the present sample, the consistency indices are  $\omega=0.843$  for Scale 1,  $\omega=0.843$  for Scale 2,  $\omega=0.778$  for Scale 3 and  $\omega=0.637$  for Scale 4.

## Design

The research design was cross-sectional since the variables of interest were only evaluated during the first treatment session.

## Data analysis

The Jamovi (2.0.0.0) and R (RStudio, 4.2.0) programs were used to perform the analyses. In order to facilitate their interpretation, the variable age was centered. The internal consistency indices of the scales used were obtained and some descriptive analyses were performed. To obtain the four attachment styles of the CAA questionnaire, the pre-screening sample ( $N=265$ ) was used and a k-means cluster analysis was performed with an initial value of four clusters, with scale standardization, MacQueen algorithm and 25 random initial values. In order to find out which group represented which affective style, an analysis of variance was performed to find out if there were differences between the groups and to determine the mean and standard deviation of each cluster with the four scales of the questionnaire. Descriptive analyses of the quantitative and categorical variables were then performed.

Next, with the sample already screened ( $N=176$ ), a hierarchical multiple linear regression was used to determine the influence of variables related to adult bonding, age and having suffered psychological and physical abuse by a parent on the use of aggression. The G\*Power program was used to determine the expected power and effect size with a total sample size and a confidence level of 0.95. First, taking into account the principle of parsimony, the variables were included step by step from the null model to the final model chosen, controlling for the age variable. Parameters were estimated and forecasts were obtained using the least squares method. Secondly, the quality of the models was assessed with the corrected coefficient of determination corresponding to each one, and finally, the assumptions of linearity, independence, normality, homoscedasticity and non-collinearity were checked.

## Results

The k-means cluster analysis divided the subjects ( $N=265$ ) into four groups based on their responses on the four subscales. The

**Table 1.**

Mean differences between the scales of the questionnaire and the four attachment styles according to the Melero and Cantero (2008) scale.

Scales	Attachment styles (N=265)								Significance
	Fearful		Worried		Dismissing		Secure		
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
Scale 1: Low self-esteem, need for approval and fear of rejection	45.5	8.69	17.7	3.78	33.2	7.52	22.6	6.53	F (156.6)***
Scale 2: Hostile conflict resolution, rancor and possessiveness	36.0	7.92	13.0	3.8	25.0	5.83	17.9	5.06	F (120)***
Scale 3: Expression of feelings and comfort with relationships	40.5	5.86	21.2	7.41	35.1	5.36	44.7	5.8	F (89)***
Scale 4: emotional self-sufficiency and discomfort with intimacy	21.1	5.39	10.6	2.86	19.0	4.04	11.9	3.41	F (95.8)***

Note. \*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001.

k-means was chosen because it is valid when  $n > 200$  and is used when the final groups are clear. In addition, it was the one used by Melero and Cantero in their validation. The ANOVAs performed (see Table 1) show that the four groups are different. The Welch statistic was used because it is the recommended statistic when homoscedasticity cannot be assumed (Vargha & Delaney, 1998). Combining the means of each group and the scales present in Melero and Cantero (2008), the affective styles corresponding to each of the clusters were obtained.

**Table 2.**

Descriptive data of the participants' variables

Variable	Participants (N=176)			
	%	M	SD	Range
Aggression		37.6	22.9	1-104
Age(N=172)		39.3	10.9	20-80
Fearful-hostile attachment	17.6%			
Preoccupied attachment	8%			
Dismissed attachment	36.9%			
Secure attachment	37.5%			
Father abuse	19.4%			
Mother abuse	9.6%			

After screening participants (N=176), four significantly different adult attachment styles were observed: fearful-hostile attachment (17.6%), preoccupied (8%), secure (37.5%) and distant (36.9%).

Table 2 presents the descriptive data of the sociodemographic variables, providing the sample size, mean and standard deviation for quantitative variables and the percentage in the case of categorical variables. The participants vary widely in age (M=39, Range=20-80). High variability was also observed in the responses in aggression (M=37.6, Range=1-104). Regarding attachment styles, secure and distant attachment styles predominate in the sample, with a low prevalence of preoccupied attachment. The results suggest that rather low percentages of the sample had suffered physical and

psychological abuse by the father (19.4%) and the mother (9.6%).

To perform the hierarchical linear regression, the least squares method was used and the goodness of fit was evaluated with the adjusted coefficient of determination (0.222). The resulting formula for the final model is as follows:

$$\text{Predictor (aggression)} = 28.523 - .454(\text{age}) + 20.435 (\text{attachment1-4}) + 1.150 (\text{attachment2-4}) + 7.687 (\text{attachment3-4}) + 10.121(\text{fatherabuse}) - 4.453(\text{motherabuse}) + \epsilon$$

Model 1 improved the fit with respect to the null model ( $\Delta R^2=0.119$ ). Only the age variable was included in this model in order to control for it (see Table 2 for the results of both models). The same was true for model 2 versus model 1 ( $\Delta R^2=0.07$ ). The adjusted coefficient of determination of model 2 indicates that the variables age, attachment style and father and mother abuse share 22.26% of the variance of the variable aggression exercised in the couple.

In the final model ( $\eta_p^2=0.250$ ), the variables age ( $\beta=-0.214$ ,  $p=0.001$ ,  $\eta_p^2=0.057$ ), physical and/or psychological abuse by the father ( $\beta=0.29$ ,  $p=0.000$ ,  $\eta_p^2=0.083$ ) and attachment style ( $\eta_p^2=0.117$ ) were significant. It should be stressed that having been abused by the mother ( $\beta=-0.07$ ,  $p=0.29$ ) was not a significant variable in this model.

The attachment variable was constituted as a dummy variable comparing all attachment styles with secure attachment. The predictions indicate that, holding all other variables constant, aggression increases by up to 20.43 points on average (or 17.62% on the aggression scale) when abusers have fearful-hostile attachment compared with secure attachment and increases by 7.68 points on average (or 6.62% according to the aggression scale scores) when men show distant attachment.

In addition, the likelihood of committing aggression increases 10.12 points on average (or 8.72%) when men have been abused by their father. Finally, age is inversely related to aggression, since it decreases on average by 0.45 points (or 0.38%) for each year that age increases.

**Table 3.**

Hierarchical multiple linear regression

	Null Model				Model 1				Model 2			
	B	SE B	IC	IC	B	SE B	IC	B	SE B	IC	IC	
Age	-0.522	.158	-.246***	[-.393, -.099]	-.476	.149	-.022**	[-.363, -.085]	-.454	.144	-.214**	[-.348, -.079]
Attachment 1-4					21.726	4.643	.940***	[.543, 1.336]	20.435	4.486	.8843***	[.501, 1.267]
Attachment 2-4					-.288	6.250	-.012	[-.546, .521]	1.150	6.025	0.049	[-.465, .564]
Attachment 3-4					9.389	3.759	.406**	[.085, .727]	7.687	3.655	0.3326*	[.020, .644]
father's abuse									10.121	2.620	0.294***	[.143, .444]
mother's abuse									-4.453	4.227	-.079	[-.228, .069]
Intercept	37.726***	1.713			30.393***	2.647			28.523***	2.601		
R <sup>2</sup> adjusted			0.063				0.179				0.222	
$\Delta R^2$							0.119				.070	

Note. Attachment (fearful-hostile = 1, preoccupied = 2, dismissed = 3, secure = 4)  
\*p < .05. \*\*p < .01. \*\*\*p < .001

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to determine whether different styles of insecure attachment (fearful, preoccupied and dismissed) versus secure, and having been abused by a parent (father and/or mother), predict aggression in men who have already been convicted of an offense of gender violence.

The proposed model can provide information on variables associated with men's violence toward their partner. Although aggression was measured using self-reported psychometric tests, the measure of perpetration is objective insofar as the participants are men who have been convicted of an offense of intimate partner violence. In addition, this work provides information on attachment styles and how parental experiences of abuse are related to aggression in this population group. Consistent with findings in the current literature, insecure attachment styles, specifically preoccupied and fearful, and having been abused by both parents, were expected to be significant predictors of aggression.

The results support the study hypotheses, albeit partially. First, 62.5% of the abusers were primarily insecurely attached compared with 37.5% who were secure. This is in line with studies indicating that batterers are essentially insecure while showing that a significant percentage of batterers have a secure attachment (Barria, 2015; Pimentel & Santelices, 2017).

Attachment style significantly predicts aggression. Specifically, aggression increases on average by 17.62% in fearful versus secure aggressors and by 6.62% in avoidant versus secure aggressors. High anxiety attachment styles (fearful and preoccupied) were expected to have more weight on aggression. However, the preoccupied attachment style was not significant. Only 8% of the participants showed preoccupied attachment, so the statistical power may have been affected by the sample size.

As has been found in other research, among attachment styles with high anxiety, this work shows that only fearful attachment style is a significant predictor of aggression (Babcock et al., 2000; Barbaro & Shackelford, 2019; Péloquin et al., 2011; Velotti et al., 2020). Fearful attachment style has been related to controlling intimate partner behavior in maltreating men (Mahalik et al., 2005). These results are consistent with the idea that people with an anxious attachment, in this case fearful, become hyperactive and develop controlling behavior toward their partner when faced with a threat of abandonment in order to avoid possible abandonment and reduce distress (Allison et al., 2008).

On the other hand, the relationship between avoidant attachment and aggression shows certain inconsistencies in the literature. These could be explained by the type of measure used. Thus, the studies in which no relationship has been found are those that evaluated aggression with self-reported instruments in the general population (Velotti et al., 2020). The research that does find a relationship was conducted with people already convicted of a violent crime (Lawson & Brossart, 2009, 2013; Lawson & Malnar, 2011). This suggests two things. First, that avoidant offenders express anger indirectly, which is more complicated to ascertain even though it is still violent (Mikulincer & Shaver, 2011). The second, that avoidant style is related to aggression in interaction with other variables and, in this context, has been linked to more severe aggression (Lawson & Brossart, 2009, 2013; Lawson & Malnar, 2011). This may be indicative of the fact that in studies conducted with the general population they do not represent cases of severe aggression, since these types of subjects are likely to be deprived of their liberty, or else do not intend to participate voluntarily in these studies (Boira et al., 2014).

Attachment style constitutes a relevant but not sufficient variable to explain men's aggression in couples. The data from this

research seem to indicate that it is more coherent to understand intimate partner violence within the framework of a constellation of individual, relational and contextual variables with complex interactions among them.

The data from this research show that having suffered psychological or physical abuse by the father is a significant predictor of aggression. Specifically, having suffered this type of child abuse increases aggression scores in abusers by an average of 8.72%. Of the total sample of abusers, 19.4% reported having suffered psychological or physical aggression from their father and 9.6% from their mother. These data are in line with Bandura's (1973) social learning model to explain the intergenerational transmission of violence. This model appreciates that children imitate the violent relationship patterns of their parents as an appropriate model, stating that men model behavior from their fathers and women from their mothers.

However, 71% of perpetrators did not report being abused by their parents. These results are consistent with research that has associated childhood abuse experiences with partner perpetration in adulthood (Brassard et al., 2020) by 56% to 63% (Roberts et al., 2010). They are also in line with research indicating that having been abused in childhood is a risk factor, but not a causal factor for the use of violence in adult relationships (Cascardi & Jouriles, 2018; Roberts et al., 2010). The fact that most of the aggressors in the sample were not abused highlights that intergenerational transmission of violence is a further risk factor for gender-based violence but certainly not a determinant or necessary factor, as there would be other relevant variables involved in aggression (Capaldi & Gorman-Smith, 2003). Consequently, the social learning hypothesis may be somewhat limited in explaining this phenomenon. In addition, given that the sample of abusers who have been abused by their mothers was small, statistical power may be affecting the results.

Having suffered abuse in childhood may be a model experience for future relationships, and may also influence the style of attachment generated with parents, which in turn may affect current attachments and the individual's relationships in general. Exposure to abuse in childhood is considered a complex traumatic experience that is related to risk situations in bio-psycho-social areas and may extend into adult stages of life (Evans et al., 2021). Taking the ecological model as a frame of reference (Heise, 1998), and in line with other studies that affirm that the relationship between abuse experiences and subsequent IPV varies widely depending on other factors (Evans et al., 2021; Roberts et al., 2010; Wagner, Jones, & Cumbers, 2019), it could be thought that other types of confounding variables could be interacting in the results found which, in interaction with the attachment style and the abuse of the father, lead to the aggression. Understanding these last two variables as risk factors for perpetration, there must be others that act as protective factors. Specifically, the results presented here would point to the secure attachment style acting as a protective factor, preventing aggression or making it less severe (Lawson & David, 2018). This would be the reason why attachment-based therapy programs have been developed to work with batterers (Sonkin & Dutton, 2003). This is why it would be interesting in future research to develop a complex model that takes into account risk and protective factors considering experiences in childhood and their path to current attachments.

The inverse relationship found between age and aggression could be related, on the one hand, to the different patterns of education received in the different generations and, on the other hand, to a tendency to normalize violence in younger generations (Ng-Mak et al. 2002) and to express themselves more sincerely about these issues.

"In terms of intervention, it would be advisable to start working immediately with abused children, trying to minimise the risk

factors associated with the abuse itself, but, above all, paying special attention to the protective factors. This would contribute to minimising the intergenerational transmission of violence. It would be a way of protecting both the children themselves and their partners in adult life, given the risk associated with gender-based victimisation”.

Logically, this research is not without its limitations. First, although participants reported whether they had been abused by a parent, the concept of “abuse” is very general. The term “abuse” can include a spectrum of experiences ranging from coercive parenting practices to severe physical aggression. Moreover, as Dardis et al. (2017) indicated, men, in contrast to women, perceive aggression as less severe and their attitudes are more favorable when it comes to accepting the use of aggression. In addition, and in the first place, this itself may have influenced the self-reported responses collected through the aggression questionnaire. Secondly, retrospective information may lead to misclassification or misremembering because of its much lower reliability than that obtained by direct observation or other means (Nader, 2003; Schacter, 2001). Thirdly, the sample size was very small for both the preoccupied offenders and for those who reported maternal abuse. The problem is that a small sample size brings little statistical power to the analyses. In addition, in the cluster analysis, the preoccupied group did not score as highly as expected on Scale 1. Finally, many other variables that may confound the results have not been controlled, among others, social desirability has not been controlled and it should be taken into account that the participants are in the first session of a judicially-imposed psychological program.

In conclusion, with the aforementioned limitations, it would seem that having suffered abuse in childhood would be a risk factor, rather than a causal factor, for the exercise of violence against the partner in adult relationships on the part of men convicted in a binding ruling for gender-based violence. On the other hand, attachment style would constitute a relevant but not determinant variable in explaining why this type of man is or is not violent toward his partner. Anxious attachment styles would be associated in principle and to a greater extent with violent behavior. Fearful men clearly seek to control their partners. Avoidant ones do not seek control, they seem to explode after accumulating what ends up being unbearable tension with reactions of extreme violence. Although it is impossible to change the past, we can change the perception of it, as well as the way in which we have learned to relate to others. This is why work on bonding in adulthood may open a door to the effective treatment of male batterers and the prevention of gender-based violence against women in intimate partner relationships. It is therefore necessary to continue research on the variables that are associated with violent behavior toward their partners in adult men.

## Grand numbers and ethical standards

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## **Capítulo 9. Hombres condenados por un delito de violencia de género en España: una tipología y caracterización basada en el análisis de clases latentes**

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### **Resumen del capítulo:**

El objetivo de este estudio es establecer una tipología de hombres condenados por violencia de género en España, examinando cómo los diferentes estilos de apego (seguro, evitativo y ansioso) se distribuyen junto con otras variables características, entre los distintos tipos de agresores. A través de un análisis de clases latentes en una muestra de 365 hombres, el apego se integra en cada tipología con otras variables psicopatológicas, de tipo e intensidad de agresión y antecedentes de violencia para conformar las categorías de agresores. Posteriormente se emplearon análisis de regresión lineal múltiple para conocer la relación entre los tipos de agresores y el uso de tácticas dominantes y coercitivas.

### **Principales resultados:**

Se identificaron tres clases de agresores:

1. Clase 1 (Disforicos/Borderline): Un 21% de los participantes formó parte de este grupo, caracterizado por un estilo de apego ansioso/preocupado y una alta probabilidad de haber sido víctima de abuso infantil. Este grupo mostró mayores niveles de agresión psicológica y menor uso de violencia física en comparación con otros grupos. También presentaron

problemas psicopatológicos como trastorno límite de la personalidad. En el análisis de regresión, esta clase predijo un uso moderado de tácticas coercitivas y de dominación en sus relaciones.

2. Clase 2 (Solo familiares/domésticos): Este grupo constituyó el 49% de la muestra y presentó el mayor porcentaje de apego seguro, con menores probabilidades de abuso infantil y antecedentes penales. Los individuos en esta clase utilizaron formas menos severas de violencia y no mostraron trastornos psicopatológicos significativos. La regresión indicó que esta clase predijo significativamente menos uso de tácticas coercitivas y dominantes.
3. Clase 3 (Generalmente violentos): Un 30% de los participantes pertenecía a esta clase, mostrando un estilo de apego predominantemente ansioso. Presentaron los niveles más altos de violencia física y psicológica severa, así como coerción sexual y una alta probabilidad de mantener trastornos de personalidad antisocial y borderline. Los análisis de regresión mostraron que esta clase fue la que predijo el mayor uso de tácticas coercitivas y dominantes.

### **Conclusiones:**

Este estudio permitió identificar tres clases de agresores condenados por violencia de género en España, diferenciados principalmente por sus estilos de apego y otras características. Los agresores más violentos, pertenecientes a la Clase 3, que mostraron una mayor prevalencia de apego ansioso, empleaban mayor uso de tácticas coercitivas y dominantes, así como con niveles elevados de violencia física y psicológica severa. Por otro lado, los individuos con apego seguro, que en su mayoría formaban parte de la Clase 2, emplearon formas menos severas de violencia y no presentaron problemas psicopatológicos significativos, lo que refuerza el papel del apego seguro como un factor protector.

Asimismo, los agresores clasificados en la Clase 1 y 3, que mostraron mayor probabilidad de presentar estilo de apego preocupado, también presentaron una alta prevalencia de trastornos

de personalidad antisocial y borderline, lo que sugiere que el apego ansioso tiende a asociarse con mayores problemas psicopatológicos en los agresores más violentos.



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# IPVAW male perpetrators convicted in Spain: a typology and characterization based on latent class analysis

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**Introduction:** Men who assault their partners present deficits in the social skills necessary for adequate interpersonal interaction. Not all of them have the same difficulties, thus they do not constitute a homogeneous group. Various studies have proposed different typologies of abusers based on their sociodemographic characteristics, criminal history, intensity and extent of violent or psychopathological traits. The majority of these investigations have been conducted in community samples, prompting the question of their validity in samples of men convicted of gender violence. The aim of this study was to establish a typology of men convicted in Spain for a gender violence crimes.

**Methodology:** A total of 365 men participated and were subdivided into three classes of abusers based on their childhood, family experiences with violence, criminal history, sexist attitudes and attitudes toward violence, intensity and type of violence, psychopathological state and attachment style.

**Results:** Coinciding with the results found in other research, 30% of the participants were classified as generally violent. They engaged in severe forms of physical, psychological and sexual violence and were more likely to do so than the rest. Additionally, they are more likely to present psychopathological problems and an antisocial character. Twenty-one percent were classified as dysphoric/borderline. They are characterized by minor forms of psychological violence, borderline or depressive symptomatology and an anxious attachment style. The remaining 49% were classified as familial or normalized abusers. This group exhibits moderate attitudes toward violence and sexism, resulting in less psychological and physical aggression. They do not present psychopathological problems and are likely to present a secure attachment style.

**Discussion:** It is argued that determining the psychological characteristics of each type of abuser would contribute to improving and adapting intervention protocols in Spain, leading to a significant improvement in the current issue of abuse.

## KEYWORDS

intimate partner violence against women, men, latent class analysis, typologies, classification

## 1 Introduction

Intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW) is a complex phenomenon consisting of multiple factors. It involves structural, community, interconnected and individual variables (Heise, 1998). In relation to the latter, it is known that gender aggressors have fewer psychological and social resources and have more difficulties in carrying out adequate interpersonal interaction than non-violent men (Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1997). These difficulties can be subdivided into cognitive, behavioral-relational and emotional (Redondo and Graña, 2012). With respect to the cognitive area, aggressors tend to minimize the consequences of the use of violent behavior, to externally attribute responsibility for their behavior, and to maintain beliefs and attitudes based on traditional gender roles (Fernández-Montalvo and Echeburúa, 1997; Sonkin and Dutton, 2003). At the relational behavioral level, deficits in social and communication skills, interaction style, need for control and dissatisfaction in the relationship are also usually involved in the explanation of violence against partners (Cantos et al., 1994; Jacobson et al., 1994; Anglin and Holtzworth-Munroe, 1997). Finally, among the psychopathological-affective variables, inadequate emotional regulation of anger or jealousy, high impulsivity, anxious-depressive symptomatology, attachment style, and presence of antisocial and borderline personality traits are usually observed (Murphy et al., 1993; Pan et al., 1994; Holtzworth-Munroe et al., 1997; Andrews et al., 2000; White and Gondolf, 2000; Sommer et al., 2017).

In addition to the above, learning history and life trajectory have also been shown to be relevant in explaining IPVAW. Some models, such as that of Cascardi and Jouriles (2018), indicate that, despite the inability to establish a causal relationship in the use of violence, experiencing violence in childhood poses a risk factor for using violence in adulthood. The study of the presence, absence and/or combination of these risk variables has revealed the heterogeneity of gender abusers. This has led to various efforts to establish an adequate classification of these. In addition, the etiological mechanisms of IPVAW have been studied in depth (Capaldi and Kim, 2007). One of the most well-known and widely replicated typologies of IPVAW perpetrators is the one proposed by Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994).

These authors distinguish three subtypes of offenders: family-only (OF), generally violent (GV), and borderline/dysphoric (BD). They classify offenders according to the intensity and frequency of the violence perpetrated, both within and outside the family setting and according to their psychopathological characteristics. OF aggressors (50%) perpetrate violence in the family setting, present a low level of violence, a normal psychological profile and good social adaptation. GV perpetrators (25%) are violent both with their partners and in other contexts, present a severe level of violence, antisocial traits and difficulties in social adaptation. Finally, BD offenders (25%) may present borderline or dysphoric symptomatology, such as emotional instability, impulsivity, dependence, fear of abandonment or insecure attachment. In addition, BD offenders present a moderate level of violence use accompanied by a dysfunctional psychological profile and variable social adjustment. Based on these results, Holtzworth-Munroe (2000) conducted another investigation in which they identified a fourth group of abusers, in which low-level antisocial characteristics were prominent (LLA; 33%). This group was between OF (36%) and GV (16%) offenders.

In this taxonomic effort there are numerous recent studies that, also based on risk variables or on the level of the risk of violence have established different typologies that include two (Loinaz et al., 2010; Loinaz, 2014; Teva et al., 2023), three (Babcock et al., 2000; Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000; Waltz et al., 2000; Stoops et al., 2010; Graña et al., 2014), four (Eckhardt et al., 2008; Thijssen and de Ruiter, 2011; Weber and Bouman, 2020; González-Álvarez et al., 2022), or up to five types of abusers (Chiffrieller and Hennessy, 2010). However, there seems to be a high degree of consensus on the existence of the three types of violent men initially noted, especially with regard to GV and FO abusers (Weber et al., 2019), there being, generally speaking, a temporal stability of abusers in their corresponding classification (Cavanaugh and Gelles, 2005).

Given the relational nature of IPVAW, some of the classifications have studied its different types taking into account the attachment style. Understanding the insecure attachment style as a risk variable (De la Osa et al., 2022), this attachment style has been related to the use of aggression in the couple (Dutton, 1995; Babcock et al., 2000; Oka et al., 2014; Barbaro et al., 2019). In contrast, a secure attachment style has been linked to the use of prosocial behaviors (Mikulincer and Shaver, 2011). According to Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart's (1994) model, the GV group tends to maintain an avoidant attachment style, whereas the BD tends to present a preoccupied or ambivalent attachment style and the OF a secure or possibly ambivalent attachment style. Similarly, Chiffrieller and Hennessy (2010) have found that BD offenders show a greater preoccupied attachment than those in the GV group, also that they are more fearful than GV and OF. Regarding secure and avoidant attachment style, these authors found no differences.

In a study in which similar categories were posed, Waltz et al. (2000) found significant differences between attachment styles and types of abusers. GV abusers showed more avoidant and less anxious attachment patterns than DFs. The latter presented higher levels of anxious-ambivalent attachment than GVs. On the other hand, Mauricio and Lopez (2009) found three types of abusers that they categorized according to the level of dangerousness, from less to more violent. Their results showed a positive correlation between certain attachment styles and belonging to more violent types. Specifically, it was found that an increase in borderline personality disorder, anxious attachment, and avoidant attachment scores was associated with a greater likelihood of belonging to the most violent class.

In none of the previous studies was attachment style included as a classification variable, but rather differences were assessed once the groups were established.

Several recommendations have been proposed for establishing classifications with IPVAW offenders. Firstly, typology studies have often been developed with community samples, but it is recommended that they be conducted with specific samples, such as men convicted by a court (Capaldi and Kim, 2007). Secondly, self-reported measures are more accurate for offender classification than other types of measures (Weber et al., 2019). Finally, as a statistical tool for establishing typologies in this area, the use of Latent Class Analysis (LCA) is recommended.

Considering all of the above, the general objective of this study is to obtain a classification of men convicted of IPVAW in Spain according to the type and intensity of the aggression, their past experiences of violence, their perception of the use of

violence, and their psychopathological and attachment style characteristics, using LCA, as this is the analytical technique of choice.

It is expected to identify different groups with characteristics similar to those found by [Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart \(1994\)](#). Also, it is expected to know the consistency and usefulness of the classification, checking whether the groups identified were related to external variables relevant to the phenomenon under study.

## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Participants

The sample consisted of 365 men ranging in age from 19 to 80 years, the mean age was 39.6 years ( $SD = 11.4$ ). Most of the men were European ( $n = 241$ , 76.1%). Of these, 217 were Spaniards (68.5%). 17% percent were Latin American ( $n = 54$ ), 6% from Africa ( $n = 19$ ) and the remaining 0.9% from Asia ( $n = 3$ ). Of the men, 59.7% ( $n = 157$ ) were middle class, 24.3% ( $n = 64$ ) lower class and 16% ( $n = 42$ ) upper class. The educational level of the participants was unevenly distributed. 51.7% ( $n = 155$ ) had a high school level of education, 28.2% ( $n = 83$ ) had completed primary education, 13.3% ( $n = 39$ ) had completed university studies and 5.8% ( $n = 17$ ) had no education at all.

### 2.2 Design and procedure

The participants in this study had been convicted of a crime of violence against their partner and were in a situation of substitution of sentence conditioned to a psychological treatment program according to Article 35 of Section IV of the Spanish Organic Law 2004 on Gender Violence, which indicates that men convicted of this type of crime must mandatorily attend a specific program of re-education and psychological treatment. Following a court order, participants are summoned to the corresponding CIS and in an individual interview, CIS professionals carry out the screening of criteria and the allocation of a treatment group to the timetable.

Data were obtained through an evaluation protocol in Spanish applied in the first session of the treatment program, which lasted approximately 2 h in total. Prior to responding the protocol, participants received information about the study's objectives and their involvement in it. Clear instructions on completing the questionnaires were provided, according to the ethical considerations on participation in research proposed by the APA (American Psychological Association) in "The ethical principles of psychologists and code of conduct," the Ethical Principles for Human Research of the Declaration of Helsinki and the Principles of the Deontological Code of the Psychologist (section IV) of the General Council of Psychology in Spain. All participants voluntarily and altruistically signed the informed consent form to participate in this research.

The sampling approach was non-probabilistic and of convenience and the design was observational, analytical, prospective and cross-sectional. The exclusion criteria established in this study were: having served the sentence, being a minor, and

not knowing how to read or not understanding Spanish correctly. It was not necessary to exclude any participant. In order to carry out this study, favorable reports were obtained from the deontological committee of the Faculty of Psychology of the Complutense University of Madrid and the authorization of the Secretariat of Penitentiary Institutions of the Spanish Government, before starting the research.

## 2.3 Instruments

### 2.3.1 Sociodemographic questionnaire

A questionnaire was created *ad hoc* to assess the sociodemographic and personal characteristics of the participants, including age, nationality and level of education. Additionally, questions were posed regarding criminal history, perceived childhood abuse by parents and other caregivers, as well as experiences and observations of violence by their father toward their mother.

### 2.3.2 Conflict tactics scale (CTS-2; [Straus et al., 1996](#))

This scale measures the frequency of the use of psychological and physical aggression, as well as the use of negotiation strategies in couple relationships. Its psychometric properties were reviewed in the abuser population ([Loïnaz et al., 2012](#)). This scale consists of 78 items (39 for each partner). It is a 7-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 0 to 6 where 0 equals never and 6 equals more than 20 times. It allows scores to be obtained on a ratio scale. It contains 10 scales of which 6 were used for this study, presenting the following reliability coefficients for this population: minor ( $\omega = 0.827$ ) and severe ( $\omega = 0.878$ ) physical violence, minor ( $\omega = 0.772$ ) and severe ( $\omega = 0.639$ ) psychological aggression, and minor ( $\omega = 0.644$ ) and severe ( $\omega = 0.845$ ) sexual coercion.

### 2.3.3 Structured clinical interview for DSM-IV Axis II disorders (SCID-II; [First et al., 1999](#))

It consists of 119 items that reflect the presence or absence of different personality disorders. In this study we used the 30 items that assess the presence of borderline (BPD) or antisocial personality disorder (ASPD). The items have 3 response options (never, sometimes and always or almost always), obtaining the following reliability coefficients:  $\omega = 0.886$  for the BPD scale and  $\omega = 0.894$  for the ASPD scale.

### 2.3.4 State-trait anger expression inventory (STAXI-2; [Spielberger, 1988](#))

This inventory provides a measure of trait anger through two subscales (anger temperament and anger reaction) and of anger state through 3 subscales (feeling, physical expression and verbal expression). An index of anger expression can also be obtained through 4 subscales (external expression of anger, internal expression of anger, external control of anger and internal control of anger). It consists of 49 items with a 4-point scale including the responses "no," "not at all," "somewhat," "moderately" and "very much." Reliability indices in this sample were:  $\omega = 0.944$  for the anger-state anger scale,  $\omega = 0.896$  for anger-trait, and  $\omega = 0.856$  for anger expression.

### 2.3.5 Plutchik impulsivity scale (EI-Is; Plutchik and Van Praag, 1989)

It consists of 15 items with four response options (never, sometimes, often and almost always) that indicate the tendency to act impulsively through its four subscales (ability to plan; control of emotional states; control of eating behaviors, spending money or maintaining sexual relationships and control of other behaviors). The reliability coefficient of the total scale was  $\omega = 0.781$ .

### 2.3.6 Brief symptom inventory (BSI; Derogatis and Melisaratos, 1983)

This is a dimensional inventory adapted to Spanish by Aragón et al. (2000) that evaluates symptomatology in nine scales, of which two were used in this study: anxiety and depression. The total scale has 53 items with Likert-type response alternatives from 0 to 4. In this population, the reliability indices were optimal ( $\omega_{\text{anxiety}} = 0.867$ ,  $\omega_{\text{depression}} = 0.910$ ).

### 2.3.7 Inventory of distorted thoughts about women and the use of violence-revised (IPDMUV-R, Echeburúa et al., 2016)

It is an instrument that assesses the cognitive biases against the partner presented by violent men. This version is derived from the IPDMUV (Spanish acronym) (Fernández-Montalvo and Echeburúa, 1997). It consists of 21 binary items that form a single scale that allows the identification of irrational beliefs in the aggressor related to gender roles and the supposed inferiority of women with respect to men, as well as the use of violence as an acceptable way to resolve conflicts. The reliability coefficient of the total scale was  $\omega = 0.777$ .

### 2.3.8 Dominating and jealous tactics scale (Kasian and Painter, 1992)

It is a scale composed of 22 items, 11 of which were obtained from the Psychological Maltreatment of Women Inventory by Tolman (1989). Its objective is to assess various forms of emotional aggression in intimate relationships with 5 response alternatives ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often) estimating the frequency with which dominating and jealous tactics are used by the respondent and her partner. In our study we included the 7 items assessing dominating tactics and the 4 items assessing jealous tactics on the part of the aggressor. In this sample, the coefficient  $\omega$  was 0.886.

### 2.3.9 Justification of verbal/coercive tactics scale (JVCT; Smith et al., 2001)

It has 26 items (13 for men and 13 for women) with 5 response alternatives ranging from 1 (never justified) to 5 (justified on many occasions). In this research, the scale was used for men to women obtaining a  $\omega = 0.846$ .

### 2.3.10 Attitudes toward interpersonal violence (AIV; Riggs and O'Leary, 1996)

It assesses beliefs associated with justifying physical aggressions (pushing, slapping and hitting) between men and women through 6 items with 5 response alternatives ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (very often). The male-on-female violence attitudes scale was chosen for this study ( $\omega = 0.809$ ).

### 2.3.11 Adult attachment questionnaire (AAC; Melero and Cantero, 2008)

The Melero and Cantero Adult Attachment Questionnaire consists of 40 items on a Likert-type scale (1–6). It evaluates different dimensions of attachment in adults. Its items form part of a latent structure of 4 factors which, grouped together, give rise to the attachment styles theorized, both bidimensional (secure and insecure) and categorical (secure, preoccupied, fearful-hostile, avoidant). The reliability indices for this sample were: Scale 1: low self-esteem, need for approval and fear of rejection ( $\omega = 0.851$ ); Scale 2: hostile conflict resolution, resentment and possessiveness ( $\omega = 0.818$ ); Scale 3: expression of feelings and comfort with relationships ( $\omega = 0.787$ ); Scale 4: emotional self-sufficiency and discomfort with intimacy ( $\omega = 0.653$ ).

## 2.4 Data analysis

The R program (RStudio, 4.2.3) was used to perform all the analyses. First, a descriptive analysis of the variables and their reliability indices was conducted. Second, a latent profile analysis was conducted to determine the attachment styles of the adult attachment scale. Third, Latent Class Analysis (LCA) was used to identify abuser typologies. LCA attempts to identify latent variables through the relationships between observed variables and to obtain patterns underlying the data, as opposed to other clustering techniques with which similarity or relatedness between observed data is obtained. Together with k-means cluster analysis, LCA has established itself as a methodologically sound technique in IPVAV offender classification (Alexander and Johnson, 2023). But LCA has certain advantages over k-means (Magidson and Vermunt, 2002) because it is based on a probabilistic model that allows cases to be assigned to clusters more accurately and error rates to be estimated. It provides objective fit criteria to determine the number of clusters. It does not require standardization of the variables, since the solution is invariant to linear transformations and, finally, it allows the use of more flexible and complex models that include variables of different natures. It also incorporates covariates that make the description of the clusters possible, since it does not require the assumption of continuous data. Multinomial variables, that are frequently used in this type of classification, can be included (McKay et al., 2022). This technique uses indicator variables (categorical) to identify latent and unobservable patterns of homogeneous groups within a more general group, finally obtaining the probability of class membership for each individual (Muthén and Muthén, 2002).

The variables included were dichotomized in terms of presence/absence according to the cut-off points stipulated by the authors or frequency (in terms of presence and absence). To choose the best of the models, statistical criteria were evaluated, but also theoretical criteria, because the model must be able to be interpreted and make theoretical sense (Muthén and Muthén, 2002; Nylund et al., 2007). The theoretical foundation of the typologies was that proposed by Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994). Model fitting was based on log likelihood descent, Akaike information criterion (AIC; Akaike, 1987), Conditional Akaike information criterion (CAIC, Saeften et al., 2021), Bayesian information criterion (BIC; Schwarz, 1978) and its variation adjusted for sample size (SABIC, Schwarz, 1978; Sclove,

1987). Although it was not a criterion for comparing models, entropy greater than 0.8 was sought (Muthén, 2008), the smallest class size was taken into account (Chen et al., 2017), and the tendency to overfit models with having many parameters was assessed (Sinha et al., 2021). After model choice, classes were assigned to each case and the probabilities of belonging to each class were obtained. Finally, the association between the assigned class membership and other variables was investigated. Its relationship with dominant and jealous tactics and the use of coercive and verbal tactics was reviewed by fitting a multiple linear regression for each variable.

## 3 Results

### 3.1 Distribution of types of aggression and risk variables

In the context of this study (see Table 1), more than half of the participants had experienced child abuse by a relevant figure. Most of them had not experienced IPVAV between their parents nor possessed a criminal record. Minor psychological violence was the most frequent form of aggression in this population, followed by minor physical violence and severe psychological violence. Almost half had borderline personality disorder and in a few cases other psychopathological problems were present. The most common type of adult attachment was secure, followed by the preoccupied attachment style. Most of the participants justified the use of coercive, verbal, dominating and jealous tactics.

### 3.2 Latent classes of IPVAV offenders

Three homogeneous groups of abusers were found. Several latent class models with 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 classes were estimated to subsequently choose the one that presented the best fit in statistical terms and the best construct validity. As shown in Table 2, the BIC suggested a three-class model. On the other hand, the rest of the fit criteria did not indicate a specific model. It is usual for the fit indicators to show inconsistent results, with the BIC being the most reliable fit statistic for the LCA (Nylund-Gibson and Choi, 2018). In addition, the 3-class model provides adequate entropy (>0.80) and percentage of subjects. Integrating statistical fit indicators and theoretical and interpretability criteria, a 3-class model was determined as the most suitable one. The classes are described below in terms of low, moderate and high probability, taking into account the indicator values and their comparison with the rest of the classes.

Class 1 (21%;  $M_{age} = 41.6$ ; 16.4% Spanish, 2.2% Latin American, 1.3% European, 1.3% African, 0% Asian). These individuals were highly likely to have a criminal record (44%), to have been abused in childhood (60%) and to have witnessed violence from their father toward their mother (27%). However, they were less likely to justify the use of physical interpersonal violence than the others (4.6%) and had less gender bias (8%). In terms of aggression, they were highly likely to use minor psychological aggression (52%) and on a moderate to severe level (23%). However, they hardly made use of minor (6.8%) or severe (0%) physical violence or sexual coercion (2%). This group is the one with the greatest psychopathological problems, having a

TABLE 1 Characteristics of the sample of men convicted of IPVAV.

	N (%)
Sociodemographic groups	
European	241 (76.1%)
Spanish	217 (68.5%)
Latin Americans	54 (17%)
Africans	19 (6%)
Asians	3 (0.9%)
Socioeconomic level	
Low	64 (24.3%)
Medium	157 (59.7%)
High	42 (16%)
Educational level	
No education	17 (5.8%)
Primary	83 (28.2%)
Secondary	155 (51.7%)
University students	39 (13.3%)
Experiences of violence	
Criminal records	129 (35.3%)
Childhood abuse	190 (52.1%)
IPVAV in family of origin	80 (21.9%)
Aggression	
Severe physical	76 (20.8%)
Minor physical	131 (35.9%)
Severe psychological	109 (29.9%)
Minor psychological	224 (61.4%)
Sexual coercion	51 (13.9%)
Psychopathology and emotional regulation	
Presence of BPD	141 (39.6%)
Presence of ASPD	56 (15.7%)
High trait anger	22 (6%)
High state anger	159 (43.6%)
High impulsivity	63 (17.3%)
Severe anxious symptomatology	32 (8.8%)
Severe depressive symptomatology	49 (13.4%)
Adult attachment	
Preoccupied	150 (41.1%)
Secure	167 (45.8%)
Avoidant	21 (5.8%)
Fearful-Hostile	27 (7.4%)
Attitudes toward violence	
Justification for the use of interpersonal violence.	33 (9.0%)
Justification for the use of verbal and coercive tactics	344 (94.2%)
Justification for the use of dominant and jealous tactics.	250 (68.5%)

TABLE 2 Comparison of model fit parameters according to different class solutions.

Numbers of class	LogLik	BIC	SABIC	AIC	CAIC	Entropy	Smallest class size (%)
2	-3,229	6,713	6,576	6,545	6,756	0.836	40%
3	-3,159	6,701	6,495	6,448	6,767	0.810	21%
4	-3,105	6,722	6,446	6,383	6,809	0.794	13%
5	-3,074	6,807	6,444	6,365	6,899	0.801	7.5%
6	-3,046	6,900	6,449	6,389	6,995	0.824	7.3%

LogLik, log likelihood; BIC, Bayesian information criterion; SABIC, sample-adjusted Bayesian information criterion; AIC, Akaike information criterion, CAIC, Conditional Akaike information criterion.

high probability of presenting BPD (69%) and high levels of state anger (68%) and depression (36%). With moderate probability they may present ASPD (15%), high trait anger (27%), impulsivity (10%) and anxiety (18%). This group is characterized by a high probability of presenting a preoccupied attachment style (68%).

Class 2 (49%;  $M_{age} = 34.9$ ; 33.1% Spanish, 9.1% Latin American, 4.7% European, 2.2% African, 0.6% Asian). These individuals were less likely than the rest to have had a criminal record (28%), to have been abused in childhood (44%), or to have experienced violence from their father toward their mother (13%). They were also moderately likely to justify the use of interpersonal violence (8%) and to hold gender biases (12%). Regarding the intensity and type of aggression, it was highly likely they used minor psychological violence (42.4%) and with less likely they chose minor (19%) and severe physical aggression (8.2%) and severe psychological aggression (4.6%) or sexual coercion (4%). In the psychopathological sphere, they have a very low probability of having psychopathological problems such as BPD (8%), TAP (2%), trait anger (4%) or state anger (3%). In addition, they do not present problems of impulsivity, anxiety and depression (<1%). Regarding attachment style, they present a high probability of maintaining a secure attachment style (65%).

Class 3 (30%;  $M_{age} = 41.5$ ; 18.9% Spanish, 5.7% Latin American, 1.6% European, 2.5% African, 0.3% Asian). People in this group are the most likely to have a criminal record (44%), to have suffered abuse in childhood (60%), and to have had IPVAV experiences in their family of origin (33%). They also justify the use of violence more than the others (13.6%) and are more likely than the rest to have sexist biases (19%). This group is the one most likely to assault in all its forms, severe physical (55%) and psychological aggression (76%), physical (83%) and minor psychological aggression (99%) and sexual coercion (31%). Their psychopathology is manifested with a high probability of having borderline personality disorder (70.3%) and antisocial personality disorder (37%) and the highest level of trait anger (30%). It is moderately likely that they present high levels of state anger (47%), impulsivity (14%), anxiety (16%) and depression (19%). Their attachment style is predominantly preoccupied (48%).

### 3.3 Effect of class-membership on the use of coercive and dominant tactics

The regression results (see Table 3) indicate that the different classes significantly predict the use of violent tactics, with class 3 being the one that resorts to them the most. First, in the model whose

dependent variable is dominating and jealous tactics, the estimated coefficients indicate that, holding all other variables constant, class 3 ( $M = 17.5$ ) uses 4 points on average more of these types of tactics than class 2 ( $M = 15.6$ ) and 1.8 points on average more than class 1 ( $M = 13.4$ ). This model explains 6.1% of the variance. Second, when coercive and verbal tactics are set as the dependent variable, the results indicate that, holding all other values constant, class 3 ( $M = 25.1$ ) uses on average 4 points more of these types of tactics than class 1 ( $M = 20.7$ ) and 5 points more on average than class 2 ( $M = 20$ ). In this case, the model explains 9.3% of the variance.

## 4 Discussion

The present study was designed to identify different types of intimate partner abusers in a sample of men convicted of gender violence. This was done using risk indicators that have been shown to be relevant in other studies. These indicators include some sociodemographic data, experiences with violence, positive attitudes toward violence and sexist attitudes, type and intensity of aggression, psychopathology and attachment styles. The results revealed the existence of three classes of abusers.

### 4.1 GV-class 3

Thirty percent of the participants were in the most violent group. They were highly likely to present psychopathology and to make frequent and intense use of violence (class 3). This clearly corresponds to Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart's (1994) GV group characterized by severe and frequent forms of violence against their partners. They are also distinguished by having mental health problems and criminal records. They also correspond to what have been called generalist (Herrero et al., 2016; Teva et al., 2023) or high-risk (Cavanaugh and Gelles, 2005; Graña et al., 2014) aggressors. The results of our study show that this group presents a high probability of having suffered childhood abuse and IPVAV experiences in their family of origin. In addition, they are more likely than the others to justify the use of violence and present sexist biases. A characteristic element of this group is that they are more likely to use all forms of aggression: severe physical and psychological, minor physical and psychological, and sexual coercion. Finally, they present a high probability of having psychopathological problems such as ASPD and BPD symptomatology, predisposition to perceive situations as hostile, impulsivity and high

TABLE 3 Linear regression models.

	Coercive and verbal tactics				Dominant and jealous tactics			
	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	$\beta$	IC	<i>B</i>	SE <i>B</i>	$\beta$	IC
Class 1–3	−4.38	1.26	−0.50***	[−0.78, −0.21]	−1.87	0.90	−0.29**	[−0.58, −0.01]
Class 2–3	−5.12	1.03	−0.58***	[−0.81, −0.35]	−4.02	0.74	−0.63***	[−0.86, −0.40]
Intercept	25.09***	0.817	–	–	17.46***	0.588	–	–
<i>R</i> <sup>2</sup> adjusted	0.061				0.093			

\**p* < 0.05; \*\**p* < 0.01; \*\*\**p* < 0.001.

prevalence of preoccupied attachment. Other works have found a similar profile of aggressors who exert violence more severely and frequently, while presenting antisocial personality disorder (Capaldi and Clark, 1998; Andrews et al., 2000; Petersson et al., 2016) and borderline personality disorder (Herrero et al., 2016). Furthermore, in another study it was observed that these men, in comparison to other groups, present psychological distress, attachment insecurity, childhood trauma and poor affect regulation more frequently, presenting the lowest levels of functioning (Brassard et al., 2023).

## 4.2 DF-class 1

The 21% of the sample constituted another group that revealed a similar configuration to the previous group but differed from it in the form and intensity of aggression. Like the GV group, participants in this class were highly likely to have a criminal record, to have been victims of violence in childhood, to have psychopathological problems such as BPD, and a certain tendency to experience anger, impulsivity, severe depression, and preoccupied attachment style. However, they were moderately likely to use minor psychological aggression. In addition, compared to the rest of the classes, they were the least likely to justify the use of violence and sexist beliefs. This group corresponds to Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart's (1994) DF classification. It is characterized by having a problematic psychopathological and relational profile and making moderate use of intimate partner violence. However, in our study, this group was not very violent. This statistic is consistent with the observations of Vignola-Lévesque and Léveillé (2022) who identified a group of gender abusers characterized by mild and moderate aggression, with great problems in managing and verbalizing their anger, anxiety and depressive affects, converging in a possible problem of alexithymia. These authors agree with other studies that have found that some intimate partner abusers have difficulty identifying, verbalizing and regulating their hostility and other negative emotions. All of this ultimately results in a variety of violent behaviors (Dutton, 2007; Piquero et al., 2014; Cunha and Goncalves, 2016) that can sometimes be interpreted as inadequate strategies to avoid abandonment (Norlander and Eckhardt, 2005; Di Piazza et al., 2017). In the case of these men, the use of destructive behaviors with their partners may be reflecting an emotional management problem (Porcelli and Mihura, 2010; Hornsveld and Kraaimaat, 2012). On the other hand, personality disorders have been associated with partner aggression (Dutton, 2007; Collison and Lynam, 2021). In these cases, borderline personality seems to play a mediating role between preoccupied attachment style and aggression (Mauricio et al., 2007).

## 4.3 OF-class 2

According to the OF subtype proposed by Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994), which is considered a normalized subtype (sharing characteristics with non-violent men), in our work we found a last and third large group (41% of the sample) that differed from the rest mainly in psychopathology, attachment style and intensity of aggression. These individuals were least likely to have a criminal history, to have been abused in childhood, or to have witnessed violence from their father toward their mother. It was moderately likely that they used psychological aggression and less likely to use physical aggression. The main difference with the previous group (DF-Class 1) is that they did not present any psychopathological problems, and also maintained a secure attachment profile, although they had a moderate level of state anger. Despite having a lower profile overall, compared to the rest of the groups, these men moderately justified the use of interpersonal violence and maintained gender biases. In line with the existing literature, this group coincides with specialist aggressors (Herrero et al., 2016; Teva et al., 2023) or those with low levels of physical and psychological aggression (Cavanaugh and Gelles, 2005; Graña et al., 2014). It is estimated that most IPVAV perpetrators would be classified in this subtype if samples were recruited from clinical and community samples (Dixon and Browne, 2003). As we found, and as observed in other research, these perpetrators showed low levels of traits related to personality disorders (Petersson and Strand, 2020) and sexual coercion toward their partners (Chiffrieller and Hennessy, 2006; Graña et al., 2014). They also presented lower levels of anger than other groups (Johnson et al., 2006; Stoops et al., 2010; Graña et al., 2014), stereotypical male behaviors (Langhinrichsen-Rohling et al., 2000; Lawson et al., 2003) and violent (Petersson et al., 2016) and sexist (Herrero et al., 2016) attitudes. However, with respect to the latter two attitudes, in our classification this group showed an intermediate profile. Nevertheless, attitudes of normalization of violence and victim blaming provided a climate in which the use of violence is more easily allowed (Martín-Fernández et al., 2018). Therefore, in working with this type of men it is very important to keep in mind that a reduction of cognitive distortions in relation to women and violence can generally improve the IPVAV phenomenon (Carbajosa and Boira, 2013; Echeburúa, 2013; Lila et al., 2013).

With respect to the use of coercive, verbal, dominating and jealous tactics, studies suggest that coercive violence is linked to broader patterns of partner domination and control. Thus, violence that occurs as a result of conflict should be distinguished from that which is premeditated (Johnson, 2008; Hardesty et al., 2015). This would explain why in our research the most violent group (GV-Class 3) was also the one that used this type of tactics more frequently compared

to the rest. On the other hand, the other two groups, with less deviant profiles, show relatively lower levels of coercive and dominating tactics. The difference between the latter resided in the use of dominating and jealous tactics, as the group corresponding to the FOs presented significantly more control and jealousy problems than those in the DB group.

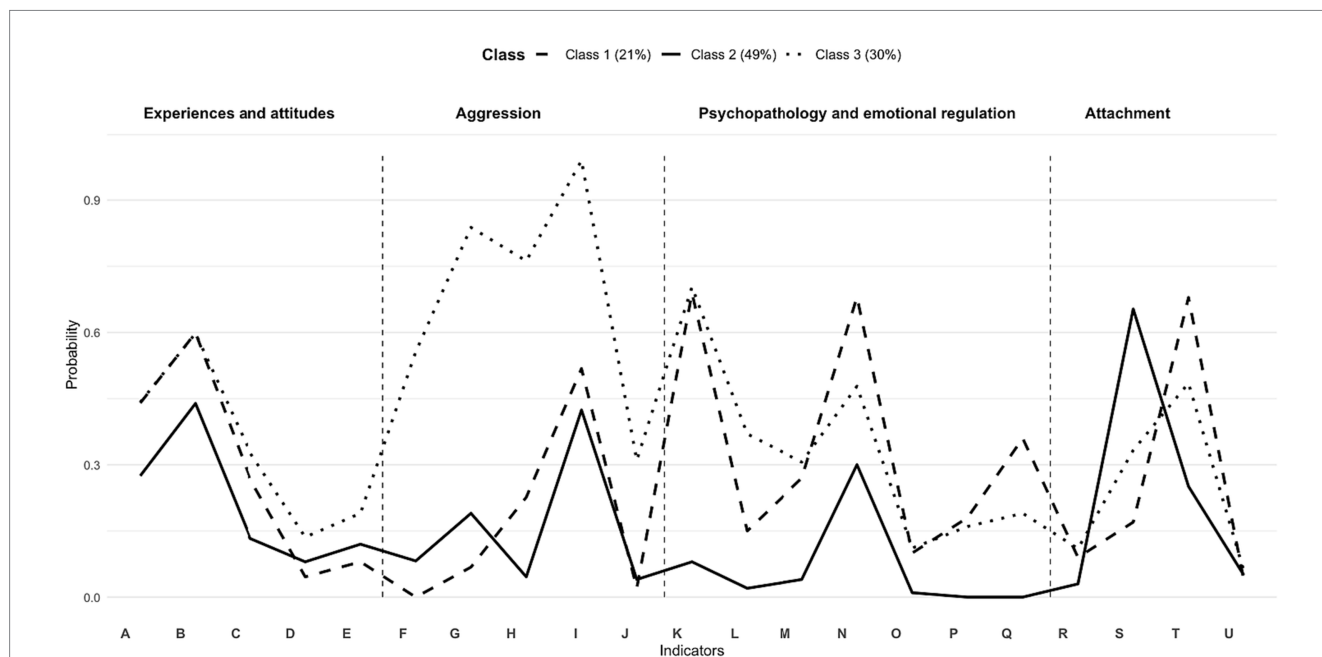
In our study, although differences are observed among the different classes, it seems that all of them have a low to moderate probability and a similar distribution in the presence of criminal history, childhood abuse experiences and having experienced IPVAV from their father toward their mother. With respect to criminal history, it appears that when criminal history is present within the intimate relationship (Campbell et al., 2007) it is a risk factor for re-offending (Piquero et al., 2006). A criminal history was present in 35.3% of our sample, a figure close to that found in other studies with similar populations (Abrunhosa et al., 2020). Regarding the influence of childhood experiences of abuse and violence, the literature suggests that exposure to family violence of origin is a key risk factor for perpetrating IPVAV (Delsol et al., 2003; Godbout et al., 2009; Fulu et al., 2017; Davis et al., 2019; Teva et al., 2020). Our results show that 52.1% of gender batterers have been physically or psychologically abused by a close family member. The latter is a value that is within the range established in the literature regarding perpetrators (Mbilinyi et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2013) and exceeds the rates estimated in general population in Europe (Stoltenborgh et al., 2013, 2015). In contrast, child abuse alone is not a determinant but a risk factor for aggression, particularly in combination with other variables (Figure 1).

Finally, participants' anger-status levels were high, even in those groups in which they did not have psychopathological problems. This

could be indicating that the participants believed that their experience of the situation and evaluation context as unfair and potentially hostile. Possibly, these results are due to a situational state, given that the evaluation occurred in the first session of the treatment group they were obliged to attend. It should be noted that these levels of anger are indicative of the main problem in intervening with this population, which is the defensive attitude with which they begin treatment (Langlands et al., 2009; Lila and Gracia, 2010).

This study has some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the sample is composed of men convicted of gender violence who were in the first session of an intervention program as an alternative to imprisonment. This undoubtedly may introduce a selection bias and reduce the representativeness and generalizability of the findings presented here to other populations. Second, the instruments used to assess the variables of interest are participant self-reported measures, which may lead to socially desirable responses. Third, the AAC avoidance scale and the CTS sexual coercion scale showed low reliability ratings and their presence in these participants was low. This could possibly be underrepresenting the importance of these variables in the study. Fourth, the study relies on a single source of information (the subjects themselves) to categorize the participants, which may generate a partial view of reality.

It would be convenient, for future studies, to contrast these data with other sources, such as victims, witnesses or police records, to obtain a more complete and accurate view of the context in which the phenomenon is generated (Hamby, 2017). Additionally, the integration of other dimensions of the ecological model could be further explored, particularly through the lens of gender bias and the construction of masculinity as influenced by context, and their



**FIGURE 1** Probability of characteristics and risk factors for each class. A, Criminal history; B, Childhood abuse; C, Family IPVAV; D, Attitudes toward violence; E, Gender bias; F, Severe physical aggression; G, Minor physical aggression; H, Severe psychological aggression; I, Minor psychological aggression; J, Sexual coercion; K, BDP; L, ASPD; M, Trait anger; N, State anger; O, Impulsivity; P, Anxiety; Q, Depression; R, Fearful; S, Secure; T, Preoccupied; U, Avoidant.

impact on the attitudes and behaviors of various offender types. On one hand, the perceived failure to conform to societal norms of masculinity may be linked to aggression in IPVAV as suggested by Reidy et al. (2014). This could correlate with varying levels of social tolerance and leniency toward IPVAV. In societies marked by violence, such aggression is more prevalent in contexts of isolation, resource scarcity, conservatism, and gender bias (Edwards, 2015; Richardson et al., 2023). On the other hand, recent years have seen the rise of discourses supporting gender equality and opposing sexism, bringing attention to subtler forms of sexism, known as 'micromachismos' (Cuenca, 2023). This shift may influence results, as current measurements suggest men do not exhibit gender bias in traditional ways. Therefore, a deeper investigation into this variable could add more nuance to the gender bias factor and enhance the findings. Furthermore, to better understand offender types, future research could compare men convicted of IPVAV who are serving custodial sentences with those serving alternative sentences, anticipating differences within this population. Lastly, considering our study's findings on attachment style, it would be insightful to determine whether fearful and avoidant attachment styles are less common in this population or if there are more suitable methods of measuring this construct among them.

In conclusion, this research uses indicators that have been shown to be relevant in other similar studies on typologies, such as sociodemographic data, history of violence, attitudes toward violence and sexist attitudes, types and intensity of aggression, psychopathology and attachment styles. These indicators can be used to evaluate the profile and risk of each aggressor, as well as to design strategies and therapeutic objectives appropriate to each case (Babcock et al., 2004). The results of this work reveal the existence of three classes of abusers that are strongly related to the widely known typology of Holtzworth-Munroe and Stuart (1994). In this research, a first class of abusers was found with a low probability of physical aggression, psychopathological problems and a preoccupied attachment style (DF). A second class was also found with a low probability of severe physical and psychological aggression and a secure attachment style (OF). Finally, a third class was found with a high probability of aggression in all its forms and major psychopathological problems and a preoccupied attachment style (GV). These types may have implications for prognosis, treatment and victim protection, given that they respond differently to treatment (Redondo and Graña, 2012). Thus, GV offenders tend to have lower rates of treatment completion and higher rates of recidivism after conviction (Weber et al., 2019). Finally, this study contributes to the advancement of scientific knowledge about the individualities of IPVAV offenders, a complex and multidimensional social phenomenon that requires a comprehensive and multidisciplinary approach (Olver et al., 2011).

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## Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available by the authors, without undue reservation.

## Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by Deontological Commission of the Faculty of Psychology of the Complutense University of Madrid. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

## Author contributions

IO-S: Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal analysis, Funding acquisition, Investigation, Methodology, Project administration, Resources, Software, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. AA: Conceptualization, Funding acquisition, Project administration, Resources, Supervision, Validation, Writing – review & editing, Investigation. PM: Project administration, Resources, Writing – original draft, Data curation. MD-D: Supervision, Validation, Writing – review & editing.

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## Conflict of interest

The authors declare that the research was conducted in the absence of any commercial or financial relationships that could be construed as a potential conflict of interest.

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## Capítulo 10. Discusión general

El estilo de apego ha suscitado un gran interés en los últimos años en la comunidad científica. La cantidad de publicaciones registradas en Web of Science (WoS) ha ido en aumento. En 1975, el número de publicaciones “apego” (en inglés, *attachment*) en título fue de 284, la cifra asciende progresivamente hasta llegar a las 1019 publicaciones en 2008 y desde entonces, en los últimos tres años el número de publicaciones por año ha aumentado de un 100% llegando a la cifra de casi 2000 artículos científicos publicados por año en esta área. Por su carácter relacional, no es de extrañar que el estilo de apego se haya investigado en el contexto de violencia en la pareja. Son muchos los estudios que han mostrado teorías sobre la relación del estilo de apego en las parejas, así como estudios de violencia dentro de la pareja, estudios diádicos, estudios sobre los agresores, y estudios sobre las víctimas. Entendiendo la VGCP como un fenómeno multifactorial en el que se ven implicadas diferentes áreas micro y macro, el objetivo de este trabajo era conocer la relevancia del estilo de apego en hombres, con evidencia de haber sido violentos con su pareja.

Los agresores de VGCP presentan con mayor frecuencia un estilo de apego inseguro frente a seguro, siguiendo unas distribuciones similares a las obtenidas en población general (Van Ijzendoorn et al. 1999). De manera regular y sin olvidar las variaciones, los resultados globales de los estudios que incluyen esta investigación indican que la proporción entre agresores con apego seguro e inseguro sigue una ratio 1:1. Entre los participantes con apego inseguro, principalmente había mayor presencia estilos preocupados que evitativos.

Los hallazgos de esta investigación indican la existencia de una relación entre el apego ansioso y la agresión, tanto psicológica como física. Existe una asociación significativa y moderada entre el apego ansioso y la agresión psicológica, y lo mismo sucede con la agresión física, aunque también relevante, la fuerza de asociación es menos fuerte. En cuanto a tipologías, los agresores tipo disfóricos y los generalmente agresivos presentaban mayor probabilidad de mantener un estilo inseguro y preocupado. El apego ansioso, se caracteriza por una preocupación excesiva por la aceptación y el temor al rechazo o abandono, ante ese miedo, el individuo podría hacer uso de comportamientos controladores y manipulativos en las relaciones íntimas. Estos comportamientos,

a menudo destinados a asegurar la presencia y atención de la pareja, pueden degenerar en agresiones tanto psicológicas como insultos, amenazas y humillaciones (Barbaro et al. 2019; Brenner et al. 2021; Mikulincer y Shaver, 2016). La conexión entre el apego ansioso y la agresión física, aunque presente, es menos pronunciada, lo que podría indicar que la violencia física es menos probable que sea una estrategia directa de individuos con este tipo de apego, y puede surgir más bien como un escalado de la violencia psicológica.

En cuanto al estilo evitativo, nuestros hallazgos sugieren una relación moderada con la agresión general, pero una asociación baja y no significativa con la agresión física. Los resultados de los estudios indican que los individuos con apego evitativo que tienden a participar en actos de violencia, es menos probable que tomen la forma de agresión física directa, orientándose más hacia formas alternativas e indirectas de violencia (Johnson, 2008; Mikulincer y Shaver, 2011). Esto puede incluir tácticas como el aislamiento de la pareja, la intimidación psicológica, y la comunicación hostil o degradante, las cuales son consistentes con su tendencia a proteger su autonomía. De acuerdo con Feeney y Karantzas (2016), estas estrategias pueden ser un intento de mantener la distancia emocional, al mismo tiempo que se controla la relación para evitar la intimidad.

El apego evitativo se caracteriza por un desapego emocional y una alta valoración de la independencia y autosuficiencia, lo cual puede manifestarse en una menor disposición a establecer o mantener vínculos emocionales íntimos (Mikulincer y Shaver, 2016). La investigación ha mostrado que, en lugar de enfrentar directamente los conflictos, los individuos con un estilo de apego evitativo pueden recurrir a la supresión emocional, lo que puede acumular frustración y resentimiento, desembocando eventualmente en explosiones de ira o actos de violencia psicológica (Dodge, 1980; Maalouf et al. 2022; Karantzas y Kambouropoulos, 2019). Las personas con apego evitativo pueden interpretar erróneamente las señales como amenazantes, lo que desencadena respuestas defensivas o agresivas (Li y Chan, 2012). Esta hipersensibilidad hacia la percepción de amenazas puede contribuir a un ciclo de conflicto y agresión, exacerbado por la incapacidad de comunicarse efectivamente sobre necesidades y emociones (Zamir y Lavee, 2015; Shi, 2003).

Uno de los hallazgos cruciales de este trabajo es que, el estilo de apego inseguro constituye un factor de riesgo relevante, pero no determinante, para la agresión en relaciones de pareja. Aunque los estilos de apego ansioso y evitativo están asociados con el uso de comportamientos agresivos, es esencial reconocer que no son los únicos predictores de violencia y que, por su parte, oscilan entre una constelación de variables de riesgo y protección cuya compleja interacción es la que da lugar a la agresión (Cascardi y Jouriles, 2018; Roberts et al., 2010). Se hace evidente que la agresión en las relaciones íntimas puede ser mejor entendida a través de un modelo que integre múltiples factores individuales, relacionales y contextuales (Heise, 1998; Swan et al., 2018). Entre los factores intrapersonales, los problemas de regulación emocional y la psicopatología presente, las historias de abuso en la infancia, el perfil de personalidad y las actitudes tolerantes hacia la violencia entre otras, juegan roles significativos en la predisposición a la agresión. En este sentido, las experiencias traumáticas en la infancia interactúan con la inseguridad por apego de manera que amplifican o modulan su impacto en la conducta agresiva (Papalia y Widom, 2024). En este trabajo está presente la influencia de diversas variables en la agresión, además del estilo de apego. La mayoría de los agresores en nuestra muestra no fueron víctimas de abuso en el pasado, pero el hecho de haber sufrido estas experiencias si se relacionaba con mayor probabilidad de uso de violencia. Este hallazgo destaca la complejidad de la transmisión intergeneracional de la violencia. En consonancia con los hallazgos de otros estudios, el abuso en la infancia supone un factor de riesgo, que no necesario, para la agresión en relaciones de pareja (Yang y Perkins, 2021).

Además, hemos identificado diferentes perfiles de agresores en nuestra muestra, cada uno con características y patrones de comportamiento distintos. Estos perfiles reflejan una combinación específica de antecedentes familiares, experiencias pasadas y características psicopatológicas y emocionales. Encontramos un tipo de agresores que tiene una alta probabilidad de presentar un estilo de apego preocupado, junto con altos niveles de ira, impulsividad, sintomatología límite y depresión. El tipo de agresor más violento con más probabilidad de haber experimentado violencia en la infancia, sintomatología límite y antisocial y actitudes tolerantes hacia la violencia, también presentaba alta probabilidad de mantener un estilo ansioso en las relaciones. Sin embargo, los agresores tipo familiar, que presentaron menores problemas de psicopatología y de experiencias adversas vividas que el resto, mantenían una mayor probabilidad de mantener un estilo de apego

seguro. Es necesario atender a otros aspectos, como los antecedentes familiares, las experiencias pasadas y las características psicológicas individuales, los cuales en conjunto desempeñan un papel crucial en la agresión.

### **Limitaciones y futuras direcciones**

Esta tesis doctoral presenta diversas limitaciones que deben ser consideradas en la interpretación de sus resultados y que, a su vez, sugieren futuras investigaciones.

Una limitación significativa es la generalidad del concepto de "agresión" utilizado en los estudios, abarcando un espectro desde prácticas coercitivas hasta agresiones físicas severas. Esta variabilidad en la interpretación del significado de agresión puede influir en los resultados de las medidas autoinformadas, afectando la precisión de los resultados obtenidos. Asimismo, existen diferencias individuales en la percepción de las agresiones entre hombres, y es posible que los resultados puedan estar sesgados por esta razón. Otra cuestión que puede estar sesgando los resultados es la validez de la información retrospectiva, puesto que es posible que surjan más errores en el recuerdo y en la clasificación que en datos obtenidos por observación directa u otros métodos controlados (Nader, 2003; Schacter, 2001).

Por otro lado, en alguno de los estudios los tamaños muestrales de determinadas variables como algunos niveles de la variable estilo de apego o el abuso sufrido por la madre fueron pequeños, lo que podría llevarnos a caer en un error tipo II en los contrastes de hipótesis donde esas variables están presentes. Además, existen muchas variables de confundido, como la discapacidad social o el nivel de ira, que no se han controlado adecuadamente. Este dato es esencialmente relevante dado que los participantes estaban en la primera sesión de un programa de intervención psicológica judicialmente impuesto y es posible que los resultados del protocolo en este contexto estén sesgados por las características del mismo. Es precisamente el tipo de muestreo lo que también nos podría llevar a un sesgo de selección, reduciendo la representatividad y generalización de los hallazgos a otras poblaciones. En esta línea, es importante resaltar que el hecho de obtener los datos de una sola fuente de información para describir a los participantes o

las relaciones entre variables puede generar una visión parcial de la realidad, sugiriendo la necesidad de contrastar estos datos con otras fuentes como víctimas, testigos o registros policiales.

En cuanto a las futuras direcciones, es necesario definir y diferenciar claramente los tipos de abuso tanto al medirlo como al informarlo en los artículos, para ello sería interesante unificar las descripciones de los tipos de agresión. Además, el uso de metodologías que combinen autoinformes con observaciones directas o verificación de terceros podría mejorar la objetividad y precisión de la información recogida sobre los agresores. En este sentido, las investigaciones diádicas pueden ser muy útiles.

Asimismo, se hace necesario explorar a fondo y en conjunto variables presentes en las dimensiones del modelo ecológico, generando un modelo global que incluya múltiples variables y mediante el cual podamos observar cuales tienen mayor peso. Por último, se hace necesariamente esencial estudiar el estilo de apego y otras variables como la experiencia de abusos de manera longitudinal, sería relevante conocer cuáles son los factores de protección y como interactúan con los de riesgo para que finalmente se lleve a cabo o no el comportamiento violento. Esto es crucial para evaluar y desarrollar intervenciones terapéuticas que tengan un impacto tanto en la reducción como en la prevención de la VGCP.

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## Capítulo 11. Conclusiones

Las principales conclusiones de este trabajo se resumen en:

- 1. Relación entre estilos de apego y agresión:** los estilos de apego inseguro, específicamente los estilos ansioso y evitativo, están significativamente relacionados con la agresión en las relaciones de pareja. Los individuos con apego ansioso tienden a manifestar comportamientos agresivos como parte de una estrategia mal adaptativa para mantener la cercanía emocional, haciendo uso de agresiones físicas y psicológicas, mientras que los individuos con apego evitativo pueden exhibir agresión de tipo general como un medio de distanciamiento emocional.
- 2. Diversidad en la manifestación de la agresión:** Los hallazgos indican que no todos los individuos con estilos de apego inseguro recurren a la agresión, y cuando lo hacen, el tipo y la gravedad de la agresión pueden variar considerablemente.
- 3. Influencia de otras variables:** Además del estilo de apego, los resultados subrayan la importancia de otros factores contextuales y personales que participan en la modulación de la agresión, lo que apoya el paradigma de que el fenómeno de VGCP se explica a través de una constelación de variables de riesgo y protección y su compleja interacción podría explicar el comportamiento violento en la pareja.
- 4. Implicaciones para intervenciones:** La evidencia de que el apego inseguro interactúa con otros factores para influir en la agresión apunta a la necesidad de enfoques terapéuticos multifacéticos en los que también se incluya un cambio en los esquemas mentales sobre uno mismo y el resto y la manera propia de vincular.
- 5. Intervenciones preventivas:** Resulta necesario trabajar con aquellas personas que han sufrido experiencias de violencia en la infancia para poder modular esas experiencias y dotar a las personas de herramientas interpersonales que les dirijan hacia modelos de relación saludables.
- 6. Futuras direcciones de investigación:** Finalmente, futuras investigaciones deberían explorar más a fondo cómo las combinaciones específicas de estilos de apego entre los miembros de la pareja afectan la dinámica de la relación y la propensión a la violencia. A

sabiendas de sus dificultades, el uso de diseños longitudinales en este área de investigación puede ayudarnos a conocer las posibles variaciones del estilo de apego así como observar cómo oscilan otros factores de riesgo durante la vida de los individuos.

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