

Sexism and Homophobia in Adolescents of a Public Educational Institution

Sexismo y homofobia en los adolescentes de una institución educativa pública

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Summary

The research explores the relationship between sexism and homophobia in adolescents of a public educational institution in Chimbote. The research design was descriptive - correlational with a sample of 406 students, including boys and girls, from 1st to 5th level of secondary education. They were evaluated using the Acosta's Adaptation (2010) of the Sexism Detection Scale (Ramos, Cuadrado and Recio 2007), and the Paredes' Adaptation (2013) of the Modern Homophobia Scale (Raja and Stokes 2005). The results of the study exhibit a very significant, direct and strong relationship indicating that the greater sexism in adolescents, the more homophobic attitudes they show. A correlation of ($r=.641^{**}$ $p <.01$) was obtained for hostile sexism and homophobia toward gays, while a correlation of ($r=.658^{**}$ $p <.01$) was obtained for hostile sexism and homophobia toward lesbians. A correlation of ($r=.574^{**}$ $p <.01$) was obtained for benevolent sexism and homophobia toward gays, while a correlation of ($r=.646^{**}$ $p <.01$) was obtained for benevolent sexism and homophobia toward lesbians. There are levels of sexism by gender, a high level of hostile and benevolent sexism for male population with 14.1% and 15.7%, respectively. In addition, there are levels of homophobia by gender in adolescents toward gays and lesbians with 35.3% and 25.3%, respectively.

Keywords: Sexism, homophobia, students.

Resumen

La investigación explora la relación entre sexismo y homofobia en adolescentes de una institución educativa pública de Chimbote. El diseño de investigación fue descriptivo-correlacional con una muestra de 406 estudiantes, varones y mujeres de 1° a 5° grado de nivel secundaria. Fueron evaluados con la Escala de Detección de Sexismo de Ramos, Cuadrado y Recio (2007) adaptación de Acosta (2010) y la Escala de Homofobia moderna de Raja y Stokes (2005) adaptación de Paredes (2013). Los

resultados de la investigación refleja una relación muy significativa, directa y fuerte que indica que a mayor sexismo en los adolescentes, mayores son las actitudes homofóbicas que puedan mostrar. Para sexismo hostil y homofobia hacia gay se obtiene una correlación de ($r=.641^{**}$ $p<.01$) y hacia lesbianas ($r=.658^{**}$ $p<.01$); entre sexismo benévolo y homofobia hacia gay ($r=.574^{**}$ $p<.01$) y hacia lesbianas ($r=.646^{**}$ $p<.01$). Se identifica niveles de sexismo, según género, un nivel alto de sexismo hostil y benévolo para la población masculina con un 14.1% y 15.7% respectivamente. También se encuentra niveles de homofobia, según género, en adolescentes hacia personas gay y lesbianas con un 35.3% y 25.3% respectivamente.

Palabras clave: Sexismo, homofobia, estudiantes.

Introduction

Since the beginning of humanity, sexuality has been questioned and analyzed assuming opinions about and attitudes towards gender behavior or style of human beings, finding several reactions or response of acceptance or rejection to gender behavior. Our Peruvian society is not unrelated to the gender behavior debate that in the past few years caused a confrontation between the Church and the Peruvian government about the information on sexuality and behavior style that would be provided to students of educational institutions, triggering passions or negative emotions of violence over positions or points of view on gender behavior or in some cases on “how the development of gender identity would be, and on homosexuals”.

The increased violence in its different forms in the society and in special concern about a type of violence related to gender or orientation. Velásquez (2003) considers that this gender violence are acts of discrimination, ignoring, submission and subordination of an individual in different aspects of his existence. Thus, gender violence is any material and symbolic attack affecting freedom, dignity, safety, privacy, and moral and/or physical integrity of people.

On the other hand, Soler and Barreto (2005) identified a gender violence type, i.e. sexism, that they consider it has risk factors that are key to explain this type of sociocultural violence, and determine its influence from the transmission of different models of masculinity and femininity to men and women according to their gender.

Nowadays, the new forms of sexism can be more difficult to eradicate, not only because of their subtle or undercover nature, but also sometimes, there is a positive tone that makes them acceptable by women themselves (Moya & Expósito, 2001).

Vizcarra & Guadarrama (2006) claims that all individuals since childhood and during their social development learn to represent the gender function they are given, both a girl and a boy regarding the assignation of a role for

each gender. Women and men are denominated feminine and male genders, respectively. Considering this position or approach we can say that gender is the result of a defined cultural social construction (Short, 1996). We can deduct now that the division of humanity has been produced with the idea of feminine or masculine that forms part of a set of beliefs that people will build with mental representations of the world and the social system where they will live.

This role played by sexuality has created gender behavior styles in adults assuming a different type of heterosexual or bisexual relationships called homosexuality. In society, people have been in favor or against these practices, and they are called “homophobic”. Regarding the homophobia problem, we can evidence that in our country Moral and Martínez-Sulvarán (2014) mention that in recent years news about LGBT population: lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgender people have been related to intolerance, violence, and even murder. Only between January 2013 and March 2014 seventeen people were murdered for having a different gender orientation. Castro (2014) wrote in *El Comercio* newspaper about a 19-year-old young man who was tortured, cut into pieces and burnt in Chachapoyas for being homosexual. And there is also the case of L.E.U.O., aged 16, who committed suicide, he hung himself from a beam in his house because of the constant bullying he suffered from his sister because she knew his gender orientation, which occurred in the city of Lima. Although equality and no-discrimination right is one of the most important rights, as it is a right itself and a means for the exercise of other rights, it is violated daily in different forms and spaces where the everyday life of the population takes place. This problem is clearly evidenced in the LGBT population.

According to PROMSEX (2016) in the annual report on human rights of LGBT people in Peru during 2015 and 2016 recorded between 2015 and 2016 eight murders of lesbian, gay and transgender people. Additionally, the Observatory Ciudadanasx: Cultural Activism and Human Rights (2017) has reported fifty complaints until August: nineteen for violence, eleven

for discrimination in private services, and nine for discrimination in public services. Thirty-one out of fifty complaints are complaints for violation of rights for gender orientation or identity, and nineteen for HIV infection.

Rottenbacher, Espinosa and Magallanes (2011) found in a research that 68% of those who admitted to having being victims of homophobic bullying reported to be homosexuals in a sample of educational institutions.

The vulnerable age group in the instauration of sexism is present in the population of adolescents because they reproduce discriminatory attitudes through the manner of dress, going out hours, friendships, sexual functions, sexual experiences, unjustified jealousy, active and passive roles in partner relationships, etc.

Thus, homophobia is not only the crude or explicit insult on the street, but also constitutes “a persistent ghostly presence that overflies everyday nature, spreading tremors and resentments, malicious acts, gilts, disgraces, and suspicions, and harvesting with unrelenting and ironic cruelty and arrogance, innumerable rifts and confrontations that produce a prejudicial miasma of violence and fear” (Lizarraga, 2005, p.33).

Ramos and Hernández (2014) in a study on an intervention to reduce gender discrimination in physical education classes in high school found that discriminatory behaviors because of gender are frequent in physical education classes, and are related to the groupings and the contents used by the faculty. In addition, they indicate that negative behaviors are more frequent in boys, and they score higher than girls do on hostile sexism scales.

Castro (2014) did research on homophobic bullying in the countries of Peru, Guatemala, and Chile, finding that bullying is manifested by several ways such as insults (“fag” and “effeminate”), physical violence threats, and victim mockery. They (homosexuals) decided to leave school because they suffered these attacks, generating perhaps a very hard impact on their future.

They affirm that this type of violence should be recognized within bullying (for sexual option) that is present in school students and in some cases they are not protected by the authorities or social agents.

Additionally, León, Zambrano and Flores (2005) report a study on the evaluation of the homophobic attitudes toward gay men and lesbians in 541 students from Arica, Chile (257 men and 284 women), exhibiting a higher level of homophobia among men with respect to male gays. Furthermore, the scale was validated for the studied sample, determining an appropriate consistency level (Cronbach alpha) for both scales.

A difference between machismo and sexism is that machismo is an attitude of power over women, while it is not so evident in sexism. Another position on these elements indicates that it is an individual or collective behavior that despises a gender for its biology, perpetuating male dominance and female subordination (Pérez, 2016).

Noting the importance and relevance of studying both variables, this research examines sexism and homophobic attitudes in adolescents of a public educational institution.

Method

Design

Ato, López and Benavente (2013) indicate that the exploration of the existing functional relationship among variables (hypothesis of covariation) can adopt three types of study depending on whether the object of the exploration is a group comparison (comparative study), a behavior prediction and/or a group classification (predictive study), or a theoretical model testing (explanatory study) for its integration into an underlying theory. Finally, the design descriptive – correlational was used in the research since information on the study variables was measured and gathered, and since it allowed knowing the

relationship between the two variables in a particular context (Hernández, Fernández & Baptista, 2010).

Participants

The sample was random, composed of 406 students of both sex (male and female) from 1st to 5th level of secondary education.

Instruments

Paredes' Adaptation (2013) of the Modern Homophobia Scale of Raja and Stokes (2005). The scale has a field of application from twelve years old. It can be administered collectively, and has no duration. It is composed of 2 scales: the subscale of attitudes toward gays (MHS-G) with a total of 22 items, and the subscale of attitudes toward lesbians (MHS-L) with a total of 24 items. The test shows a subscale of attitudes toward gays (MHS-G) with a total of 22 items (Cronbach alpha: .94); and a subscale of attitudes toward lesbians (MHS-L) with a total of 24 items (alpha: .93).

Acosta's Adaptation (2010) of the Adolescent Sexism Detection (ASD) Scale (Recio, Ramos and Cuadrado 2007). It is applied individually and collectively with an approximate duration from 10 to 15 minutes. It is aimed at adolescents with ages ranging from 14 to 17 years old. It measures the detection of sexism for traits and attitudes traditionally considered masculine or feminine, also allowing differentiating between the traditional hostile and benevolent sexism. The instrument is composed of 26 Likert-type response items with 6 response options (1 to 6), and assesses two aspects: hostile sexism (HS) and benevolent sexism (BS). The Cronbach Alpha is .856 and .719 in the hostile and benevolent sexism scale, respectively.

Results

Table 1

Correlation between Sexism and Homophobia

		Homophobia	
		Gay	Lesbian
		r	r
Sexism	Hostile	.641**	.658**
	Benevolent	.574**	.646**

** $p < .01$

Table 2.

Levels of Sexism for Dimensions by Gender

		Sexism			
		Hostile		Benevolent	
		Men	Women	Men	Women
Levels	Very low		0.2%	0.2%	
	Low	4.5%	2.6%	4%	2.2%
	Medium	9.5%	7.5%	9.4%	8.6%
	High	14.1%	10%	15.7%	7.5%
	Very high	1%	0.7%	1.9%	0.3%

Table 3.*Levels of Homophobia for Dimensions by Gender*

	Homophobia			
	Gay		Lesbian	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Very low			1.2%	1%
Low	6.2%	2.4%	3.9%	4.7%
Medium	20.8%	15.4%	25.4%	22.9%
High	35.3%	11.7%	25.3%	10.2%
Very high	4.5%	3.6%	2.3%	3.1%

Discussion

The relationship between sexism and homophobia was analyzed in the research, and it showed a correlation of $r=.641$ between hostile sexism and homophobia toward gays, a correlation of $r=.658$ toward lesbians. Between benevolent sexism and homophobia toward gays ($r=.574$) and lesbians ($r=.646$), it is visible a level of intensity of the relationship between sexism and homophobic attitudes in adolescents. The results show that people hold negative attitudes toward gay men and lesbians with stereotypical gender-roles. These tendencies toward gender behaviors and occupations are exhibited exclusively in males or exclusively in females, leading to sexism and homophobia. It should be noted Ficarrotto (1990) who affirms that individuals with strong gender-role stereotypes also tend to hold negative and prejudicial beliefs toward women, and tend to see homosexuality as a violation of these stereotypical gender-roles.

In the dimension of homophobia toward gays and the dimensions of sexism in adolescents, there is a very significant, direct and strong correlation

between the dimensions of hostile sexism ($r=.641$) and benevolent sexism ($r=.574$). These results are consistent with Ruiz (2006), who determines that people hold negative attitudes toward gay men, and that homophobic attitudes toward gays are higher when it comes to hostile stereotypes than gender stereotypes, considering that ambivalent sexism indicators are greater.

In addition, there is a very significant, direct and strong correlation between the dimensions of homophobia toward lesbians and the dimensions of sexism in adolescents of a public educational institution showing hostile sexism ($r=.658$) and benevolent sexism ($r=.646$). Consequently, it shows that homophobic attitudes toward lesbians are based on the fact that within the patriarchal culture, the relationships between two women, who are perceived as mere sexual objects and are denied their sexuality and their right to sexual pleasure, are eroticized, i.e. they are perceived as submissive objects of male sexual desire, and the political construction of heterosexuality is reaffirmed as the organizing principle of sexual relationships (Ruiz, 2006).

Finally, there are levels of sexism by gender, evidencing a high level of hostile and benevolent sexism in male population with 14.1% and 15.7%, respectively. Also, it is observed levels of homophobia by gender in adolescents toward gays and lesbians with 35.3% and 25.3%, respectively. This shows that this population holds an attitude of annoyance that can turn into angry and aggressive feelings toward gays and lesbians. In comparison, León, Zambrano and Flores (2005) report in their research that men have a higher level of homophobia toward homosexuals. Ramos and Hernández (2014) found high scores in the dimensions of sexism. This can be understood that men exhibit more prejudices, having a more stereotyped and limited vision of women, and also with a tone that is more affective and linked to supportive behaviors.

On the basis of the above considerations, it does not imply causality if it reflects the association between sexism and homophobia in adolescents of an educational institution. Therefore, this is a start for contribution that can generate proposal for intervention.

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