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Tomás Cánovas, Lidia; Moral de Calatrava, Paloma; Canteras Jordana, Manuel  
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## ORIGINALES

### Gender violence within the different sexual orientations in Spain

Violencia de género dentro de las diferentes orientaciones sexuales en España

Lidia Tomás Cánovas <sup>1</sup>  
Paloma Moral de Calatrava <sup>2</sup>  
Manuel Canteras Jordana <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>. Virgen de la Arrixaca University Hospital. Murcia. Spain. [lidiatomascanovas@gmail.com](mailto:lidiatomascanovas@gmail.com)

<sup>2</sup>. Department of Nursing Full Professor. University of Murcia. Spain.

<sup>3</sup>. Department of Socio-Sanitary Sciences. University of Murcia. Spain.

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#### ABSTRACT:

**Objective:** To determine if sexual orientation influences within the domestic violence in the different sexual orientations without considering the biological sex.

**Material and method:** Two-way ANOVAs were performed from two tests, WAST screening and ISA diagnostic and a factorial analysis. the collected sample consisted of 454 subjects of which 156 were homosexual, 265 heterosexual, 30 bisexual and 2 did not answer.

**Results:** The four identified violence (interpersonal, social, physical and psychological) did not show significant differences in relation to sexual orientation regardless of biological sex, in the same way violence was observed within the couple as marginal.

**Conclusions:** Violence within the couple was observed within all partner structures, so violence was independent of sexual orientation.

**Key words (mesh):** intimate partner violence; gender violence; sexual behavior.

#### RESUMEN:

**Objetivo:** Determinar si la orientación sexual influye dentro de la violencia sufrida dentro del hogar en las diferentes orientaciones sexuales sin considerar el sexo biológico.

**Material y método:** Se realizaron ANOVAs de dos vías a partir de dos test, WAST de cribado e ISA de diagnóstico y un análisis factorial. La muestra recogida consistió en 454 sujetos de los cuales 156 fueron homosexuales, 265 heterosexuales, 30 bisexuales y 2 no contestaron.

**Resultados:** Las cuatro violencias identificadas (interpersonal, social, física y psicológica) no mostraron diferencias significativas en relación a la orientación sexual con independencia del sexo biológico, de la misma forma se observó la violencia dentro de la pareja como algo marginal.

**Conclusiones:** La violencia dentro de la pareja se pudo observar dentro de todas las estructuras de pareja, por lo que la violencia fue independiente de la orientación sexual.

**Palabras clave:** violencia de género; violencia de pareja; conducta sexual.

# INTRODUCTION

Until not many years ago, the violence within the couple was something that could be considered normal. The social ideas based on the obedience of the woman towards the husband were deeply rooted in our social structure, not that long ago, the Franco civil code of 1958 required that man protect woman and woman to obedience the man (1-4).

These ideas today are more towards greater equality between men and women, both inside and outside home<sup>5</sup>. The United Nations Organization has made multiple appeals to the idea of discrimination suffered by many women around the world, in reference to this same controversy, domestic violence is one of the problems this same organization poses (5,6).

Violence within the family is very difficult to identify because the fear of the victims to report their situation of abuse and the feeling of impunity of the abusers. This makes really difficult the eradication of this sort of violence (7-11). But domestic violence is special, because it manifests itself in cycles, as Leonore Walker defines it, by calling this "cycle of violence" where one specifically observes the concrete construction of gender violence within a couple, so she defined it in three phases: 1st. Tension-building Phase that goes accompanied by an increase in danger, 2nd. Acute Explosion is a serious incident of abuse, 3rd. Honeymoon Stage regret of the abuser (12, 13).

In Spain, in 2004, the Comprehensive Law against gender violence was approved (14) in which an attempt was made to give some kind of solution to this intimate and private problem, since happens within a sentimental relation of a couple and in the privacy of their home. Even so, when we talk about domestic violence, we talk about power relations, initially as indicated by the Comprehensive Law against gender violence in Spain, of the socially and culturally established power relations from men towards women within a couple (1, 15), but the question here is whether this same thing happens within all existing couples or only within those formed by a man who mistreats and a woman who is a victim.

There are some studies that consider that this type of violence is not exclusive to heterosexual couples, and emphasize that lesbian and gay couples have similar rates of violence to heterosexual couples (16-20). Other studies suggest that the domestic violence in gay and bisexual men is comparable to the domestic violence in women (16).

For all the above, the objective of this study is to assess the existence or not of violence within the couples who maintain a romantic relationship, regardless of their sexual orientation, that is, in gay men/ lesbians, bisexual and heterosexual people regardless of the biological sex of the participants in the study.

## MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

### MATERIAL

Two surveys were used, one for the realization of a population screening, the Women Abuse screening tool, in its short version, and another used to identify violence between partners by measuring interpersonal aggression, the Index Spouse Abuse (21).

### **Woman abuse screening tool (WAST)**

This questionnaire was developed in the United States in 1996 as a detection instrument; it contains 7 items where the degree of tension and difficulty in the relationship is asked. Here we apply its short version that includes only 2 questions in relation to tension and difficulty, we consider 3 possible answers to both questions: without tension / difficulty, some tension / difficulty, a lot of tension / difficulty <sup>(21)</sup>.

This questionnaire was evaluated giving a score of 1 to all positive responses (some or a lot of tension / difficulty) and a rating of 0 to all negative responses (without tension / difficulty). Therefore, the final score ranged from 0 to 2, considering score 2 as a positive result in the selection. This type of evaluation was the most appropriate for the Spanish version because it presented a sensitivity of 93% and a specificity of 68% <sup>(22, 23)</sup>.

### **Index spouse abuse (ISA)**

This scale was initially developed for medical use in the United States and measures physical violence, Sexual abuse, emotional abuse along with control and isolation behaviors. It was designed in the clinical setting in 1981 in this same country to evaluate the process in interventions to battered women. It contains 30 items on a Likert type scale of 1 to 5 (1 never and 5 very frequently).

In this study all kinds of generic considerations were taken into account, since the intentionality of the same was to evaluate whether gender violence itself (that is the violence that is suffered through a couple relationship and in a specific way with the idea of the cycle of violence of Leonore Walker <sup>(12, 13)</sup> was present in all possible potential victims, regardless of their sex, within the parameters of the power relationship. The use of male samples was given by Santos-Iglesias and cols with the realization of a study to evaluate the psychometric properties of this scale in men mistreated by their partner. 598 Spanish men aged between 18 and 77 participated. This instrument was approved as adequate for the evaluation of partner abuse in men <sup>(22)</sup>.

In the present study, sampling was carried out by collecting data at the University of Murcia from two surveys conducted at the University and several Spanish associations of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexuals, transexual and Intersex people (LGBTI) and from the social network Facebook, between January and March 2015.

## **METHODOLOGY**

To carry out this study, a descriptive analysis was made with a series of two-way ANOVAS from the two different tests, screening (WAST) and diagnosis (ISA) and a factorial analysis to determine the types of violence established within the Spanish population.

## **RESULTS**

To carry out this work, a total of 454 subjects participated. 156 subjects (34.36%) define themselves as gay\lesbian, 265 subjects (58.37%) defined themselves as heterosexual, 30 subjects (6.61%) define themselves as bisexual and 2 subjects (0.66%) did not answer the question related to sexual orientation.

From the completion of a factorial analysis, it was established that gender violence within this construct was divided into four very specific types: Interpersonal violence (related to jealousy), Social violence (related to the environment), Physical violence (related to physical aggression) and Psychological violence (psychological abuse itself).

Base on the definition of sexual orientation of the subjects who participated in the survey, the analysis was established in 3 groups: Gay/Lesbian, Heterosexual and Bisexual on relation to all four types of violence established in ISA, based on the results of the factorial analysis : Interpersonal Violence, Social Violence, Physical Violence and Psychological Violence.

### Interpersonal violence (in relation to sexual orientation)

**Table I:** Average and standard deviation of the values of Interpersonal Violence by WAST and Sexual Orientation

WAST	SEXUAL ORIENTATION	Average	Standard deviation	N
<b>0. NEGATIVE</b>	<b>Gay/Lesbian</b>	1,3056	,41682	54
	<b>Heterosexual</b>	1,3427	,49125	124
	<b>Bisexual</b>	1,2273	,34378	11
	<b>Total</b>	1,3254	,46264	189
<b>1. NEGATIVE</b>	<b>Gay/Lesbian</b>	1,4712	,60564	52
	<b>Heterosexual</b>	1,6986	,59360	73
	<b>Bisexual</b>	1,5625	,32043	8
	<b>Total</b>	1,6015	,59276	133
<b>2. POSITIVE</b>	<b>Gay/Lesbian</b>	1,8542	,74347	48
	<b>Heterosexual</b>	1,9423	1,04156	52
	<b>Bisexual</b>	1,9444	,76830	9
	<b>Total</b>	1,9037	,89359	109
<b>Total</b>	<b>Gay/Lesbian</b>	1,5325	,63574	154
	<b>Heterosexual</b>	1,5723	,71052	249
	<b>Bisexual</b>	1,5536	,58277	28
	<b>Total</b>	1,5568	,67576	431

Regarding interpersonal violence and sexual orientation, 431 subjects were observed, WAST 0 (Negative): $1.33 \pm 0.46$ ; WAST 1 (Negative):  $1.60 \pm 0.59$ ; WAST 2 (Positive): $1.90 \pm 0.89$ ( $p < 0.0005$ ). The greater the WAST, the more interpersonal violence. (Table I)

Regarding sexual orientation (Gays\lesbian:  $1.53 \pm 0.63$ , Heterosexuals:  $1.57 \pm 0.71$ , Bisexuals:  $1.55 \pm 0.58$ ) do not present significant differences.

### Social violence (in relation to sexual orientation)

**Table II:** Average and standard deviation of the values of Social Violence by WAST and Sexual Orientation.

WAST	SEXUAL ORIENTATION	Average	Standard deviation	N
0. NEGATIVE	Gay/Lesbian	1,1778	,24585	45
	Heterosexual	1,0952	,29798	96
	Bisexual	1,0857	,07825	5
	Total	1,1204	,27958	146
1. NEGATIVE	Gay/Lesbian	1,1975	,24872	34
	Heterosexual	1,1603	,27298	49
	Bisexual	1,1714	,18626	5
	Total	1,1753	,25786	88
2. POSITIVE	Gay/Lesbian	1,5784	,68508	41
	Heterosexual	1,4740	,85978	44
	Bisexual	1,5714	,68213	6
	Total	1,5275	,76833	91
Total	Gay/Lesbian	1,3202	,48188	120
	Heterosexual	1,2003	,50652	189
	Bisexual	1,2946	,46502	16
	Total	1,2492	,49752	325

Regarding social violence and sexual orientation, 325 subjects were observed, WAST 0 (Negative): $1.12 \pm 0.28$ ; WAST 1 (Negative): $1.17 \pm 0.26$ ; WAST 2 (Positive): $1.53 \pm 0.77$  ( $p < 0.0005$ ). The greater the WAST, the more social violence. (Table II)

Regarding sexual orientation (Gays\lesbian:  $1.32 \pm 0.48$ , Heterosexual:  $1.20 \pm 0.51$ , Bisexual:  $1.29 \pm 0.47$ ) did not present significant differences.

### Physical violence (in relation to sexual orientation)

**Table III:** Average and standard deviation of the values of Physical Violence by WAST and Sexual Orientation

WAST	SEXUAL ORIENTATION	Average	Standard deviation	N
0. NEGATIVE	Gay/Lesbian	1,0333	,08594	45
	Heterosexual	1,0791	,33694	98
	Bisexual	1,0250	,05590	5
	Total	1,0633	,27875	148
1. NEGATIVE	Gay/Lesbian	1,0263	,06600	38
	Heterosexual	1,1178	,31933	52
	Bisexual	1,1250	,15309	5
	Total	1,0816	,24514	95
2. POSITIVE	Gay/Lesbian	1,1923	,34394	39
	Heterosexual	1,2151	,54166	43

	<b>Bisexual Total</b>	1,2292 1,2060	,30017 ,44570	6 88
<b>Total</b>	<b>Gay/Lesbian Heterosexual Bisexual Total</b>	1,0820 1,1198 1,1328 1,1065	,21667 ,38923 ,21149 ,32826	122 193 16 331

Regarding physical violence and sexual orientation, 331 subjects were observed, WAST 0 (Negative):  $1.06 \pm 0.28$ ; WAST 1 (Negative):  $1.08 \pm 0.25$ ; WAST 2 (Positive):  $1.21 \pm 0.45$  ( $p < 0.0005$ ). The greater the WAST, the more physical violence (table III).

Regarding the sexual orientation (Gays\lesbian:  $1.08 \pm 0.22$ , Heterosexuals:  $1.12 \pm 0.39$ , Bisexuals:  $1.13 \pm 0.21$ ) did not present significant differences.

### Psychological violence (in relation to sexual orientation)

**Table IV:** Average and standard deviation of the values of Psychological Violence by WAST and Sexual Orientation.

WAST	SEXUAL ORIENTATION	Average	Typical deviation	N
<b>0. NEGATIVE</b>	<b>Gay/Lesbian</b>	1,0939	,12835	55
	<b>Heterosexual</b>	1,1009	,28093	123
	<b>Bisexual</b>	1,1597	,16460	12
	<b>Total</b>	1,1026	,23971	190
<b>1. NEGATIVE</b>	<b>Gay/Lesbian</b>	1,1826	,23224	47
	<b>Heterosexual</b>	1,2108	,34207	68
	<b>Bisexual</b>	1,3125	,37731	8
	<b>Total</b>	1,2066	,30616	123
<b>2. POSITIVE</b>	<b>Gay/Lesbian</b>	1,6631	,86340	47
	<b>Heterosexual</b>	1,3924	,66666	48
	<b>Bisexual</b>	1,5185	,62469	9
	<b>Total</b>	1,5256	,76350	104
<b>Total</b>	<b>Gay/Lesbian</b>	1,3015	,56258	149
	<b>Heterosexual</b>	1,1907	,41670	239
	<b>Bisexual</b>	1,3132	,42588	29
	<b>Total</b>	1,2388	,47673	417

Regarding psychological violence and sexual orientation, 417 subjects were observed, WAST 0 (Negative):  $1.10 \pm 2.24$ ; WAST 1 (Negative):  $1.21 \pm 0.31$ ; WAST 2 (Positive):  $1.53 \pm 0.76$  ( $p < 0.0005$ ). The greater the WAST, the more the psychological violence (Table IV).

Regarding sexual orientation (Gays/lesbian:  $1.30 \pm 0.56$ , Heterosexuals:  $1.19 \pm 0.46$ , Bisexuals:  $1.31 \pm 0.43$ ) did not present significant differences.



## DISCUSSION

From the results of this work, it could be considered that the sexual orientation of the subjects in reference to violence within the couple has no influence. Meaning, the violence in the relationship is presented independently of the sexual orientation. It can appear in all sort of couples, whether gay\lesbian, heterosexual or bisexual within this study group, as also shows in the study by Sorenson and Thomas in May 2009 <sup>(16)</sup>, which states that gay/ lesbian couples have similar rates of violence within the couple.

Other studies do not support this perception, such as the research carried out by Tjaden and cols in 1999 <sup>(24)</sup>, from telephone surveys, where it was established that violence is more frequent in couples of gay men than among heterosexual couples, in the same way violence between couples of lesbian women is less frequent than in heterosexual couples. Salvidia and cols (2017) affirmed that the violence between the couple, in young gay people (men and women) was set at 84%, men presented more physical violence (36.5%) than women (28.4%), whereas sexual violence was observed more frequently in women (52.3%) compared to men (42.3%) <sup>(20)</sup>. Gómez and cols, in their study conducted in 2017, reported that 17.25% of a sample of 467 gay men and lesbian women had suffered some sort of abuse. Of these 17,25 %, men reported having suffered more psychological violence (87.5%) compared to women (65.8%) <sup>(19)</sup>.

According to the present study, violence between couples can occur in gay\lesbian heterosexual or bisexual people within this study group, in each and every one of the different structures, from interpersonal, social and physical violence to psychological violence.

There are studies that consider that non-heterosexual couples suffer violence within their partnership. As shown in the research carried out by Renzetti in 1992 <sup>(25)</sup>, Lhomond and Saurel-Cubizolles in 2006 <sup>(26)</sup>, Mak and cols in 2010 <sup>(27)</sup>, and the study conducted by the Aldarte Association in 2010 <sup>(28)</sup>. In the Spanish context, most of the research is orientated to heterosexual couples. There have not been many studies that treat different sexual orientations as a predisposing factor in relation to violence within the couple.

It is worth highlighting a study carried out by Finnegan and Stephenson in 2013, in relation to the police power perceived by gay and bisexual men in relation to violence within the couple. It was observed that this was very bad in relation to their group, establishing that this problem was more associated with heterosexual women <sup>29</sup>. Therefore, it is very complex to establish a problem that even the collectives themselves do not see as their own.

The type of survey used in this study should also be taken into account, since it was a Likert survey from 1 to 5 (from never to very frequent) and the observed average values were between 1 and 2 (from never to rare), It can be said that violence within the couple seems to be independent of sexual orientation and is a phenomenon that doesn't occurs frequently.

## CONCLUSION

Violence within the gender can be observed with the same intensity in terms of sexual orientation. No significant findings have been found that shows any population group



related to sexual orientation (homosexuality, heterosexuality and bisexuality) that has higher rates of violence than others.

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