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Attachment and sexism in adult population between 18 and 60 years in Quito, Ecuador

Apego y sexismo en población adulta entre 18 y 60 años en Quito, Ecuador

Apego e sexismo na população adulta de 18 a 60 anos em Quito, Equador

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Abstract: The objective of this research was to investigate the relationship between attachment styles and the presence of sexist attitudes in men and women. One thousand three hundred and seventy-three people from the city of Quito participated, 55.4 % women and 44.6 % men aged 18 to 60, who completed an attachment instrument and two sexism inventories. The results showed differences in sexism between secure attachment and fearful and preoccupied attachments, but not with the dismissing type of attachment, indicating that sexist attitudes (benevolent and hostile) are related to attachment styles derived from negative models of the self in both sexes. It is concluded that people who have not internalized an adequate sense of their own value have a greater tendency to present sexist attitudes.

Keywords: adulthood; sexist attitudes; masculinity-femininity; emotional bond.

Resumen: La presente investigación tuvo como objetivo indagar la relación entre los estilos de apego y la presencia de actitudes sexistas en hombres y mujeres. Participaron 1373 personas de la ciudad de Quito, 55.4 % mujeres y 44.6 % hombres de 18 a 60 años, quienes completaron un instrumento de apego y dos inventarios de sexismo. Los resultados mostraron diferencias en sexismo entre el apego seguro y los apegos temeroso y preocupado, no así en el apego alejado, lo que indica que las actitudes sexistas (benevolentes y hostiles) se relacionan con estilos de apego derivados de modelos del *self* negativos en ambos sexos. Se concluye que las personas que no han internalizado un sentido adecuado de su propio valor tienen mayor tendencia a presentar actitudes sexistas.

Palabras clave: edad adulta; actitudes sexistas; masculinidad-femineidad; vínculo afectivo.



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Resumo: A presente pesquisa teve como objetivo investigar a relação entre estilos de apego e a presença de atitudes sexistas em homens e mulheres. Participaram 1.373 pessoas da cidade de Quito, 55,4 % mulheres e 44,6 % homens entre 18 e 60 anos, que preencheram um instrumento de apego e dois inventários de sexismo. Os resultados mostraram diferenças no sexismo entre apego seguro e apegos de medo e preocupação, mas não no apego distante, indicando que as atitudes sexistas (benevolentes e hostis) estão relacionadas estilos de apego derivados de modelos negativos do *self* em ambos os sexos. Conclui-se que as pessoas que não internalizaram um senso adequado de seu próprio valor têm maior tendência a apresentar atitudes sexistas.

Palavras-chave: idade adulta; atitudes sexistas; masculinidade-feminilidade; vínculo afetivo.

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Attachment theory (Bowlby, 1969/1998) describes the interactions that are established between the caregiving figure and the infant, and the implications for their socio-affective development, as the child is confronted with the dependence of their caregivers and the type of response they give to the child's needs. The quality of these interactions generates internal representations of operative models of both self and others, which become prototypes for later relationships (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). Based on these prototypes, the child develops a representation of the value of the self (Model of Self) and a representation of the availability of others (Model of Other). Bowlby (1969/1998) related the model of self to the experience of anxiety in interactions with caregivers, and the model of other to the approach/avoidance in the relationship with others. These two models of self and of other, are dimensions that vary from positive pole to negative pole and combine to give rise to different attachment styles (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016).

Most children develop a positive pattern of interaction (secure attachment) with their caregiver figure (Mesman, Van Ijzendoorn & Sagi-Schwartz, 2016), which occurs if the caregiver responds sensitively to the child's needs, establishing the caregiver as a secure base on an emotional level. In these cases, the individual develops a valued sense of self and generates expectations that others will respond appropriately to his/her demands, so he/she will feel confident and seek social contact. When the caregiver figure does not respond sensitively to the child's needs, producing a non-optimal interaction (strictness, ambivalence,

neglect or even violence and abuse), an insecure attachment is established, which is expressed in three patterns in adult life: distant (also called avoidant), preoccupied (or ambivalent), and fearful (or disorganized) (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994). In distant attachment, the model of self is adequate, but the individual avoids contact with others because he/she has negative expectations of their response. People with preoccupied attachment have a low model of self but try to validate it by getting too close to others, which makes them vulnerable when their needs are not met. Finally, in fearful attachment, individuals are highly dependent on the validation of others because they present a deficient model of self but fail to achieve intimacy with others because they have negative expectations about their availability (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994).

The long-term repercussions of the attachment style, and of the operation of the internalized model have also been explored, demonstrating its influence in adulthood (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991; Di Bártolo, 2017). Bowlby (1969/1998) proposed that, once these models have been constructed, they tend to remain fairly stable throughout life, operating at the unconscious level. Therefore, what the individual will become, at a cognitive, social and emotional level, will be based on the first internal operating model he/she developed.

Research in adults shows that the distribution of attachment styles is much more variable than that seen in children or youth (Magai, Frias & Shaver, 2016). In fact, in the review of several studies (e.g., Consedine & Fiori, 2009; Garrido, Guzmán, Santelices, Vitriol & Baez, 2015; Guzmán & Contreras, 2012; Lozano, Albarracín, & Vásquez, 2016; Soerensen, Webster & Roggman, 2002; Teixeira, Ferreira & Howat-Rodrigues, 2019), secure attachment was found to be reported in a range between 85.70 % (Garrido et al., 2015) and 12.90 % (Teixeira et al., 2019); distant attachment in a range between 77.60 % (Consedine & Fiori, 2009) and 3.60 % (Garrido et al., 2015); preoccupied attachment in a range between 25.60 % (Guzmán & Contreras, 2012) and 4 % (Soerensen et al., 2002), and fearful attachment in a range between 60.50 % (Teixeira et al., 2019) and 9 % (Soerensen et al., 2002). Magai et al. (2016) have posited that as one advances in age, secure styles decrease and the proportion of adults with distant attachment increases, possibly due to increased experiences of loss.

As for sexism, Ecuadorian culture, as in many other Latin American contexts, is crossed by notions that, beyond being ideologies, are transferred to the level of attitudes, behaviors, and ways of relating to people according to their biological sex.

The Royal Spanish Academy (2018) defines *sexism* as the “discrimination of people based on their sex”. In psychology, the referential theoretical model on the subject is that of Glick and Fiske (1996), who proposed a two-dimensional construct that describes sexism towards women through two dimensions: hostility and benevolence. Although different from one another, both dimensions establish the superiority of the male gender over the female. Thus, benevolent sexism positively emphasizes female “weakness”, idealizes the roles traditionally assigned to women, and can generate protective behaviors; this type of sexism reinforces women's subordination through punishment and reward devices, while masking male hostility with an apparently positive tone (Boira, Chilet-Rosell, Jaramillo-Quiroz & Reinoso, 2017; Cárdenas, Lay, González, Calderón & Alegría, 2010; Janos & Espinosa, 2018). The second type of sexism, called hostile, is made up of a series of prejudiced attitudes

expressed with a more explicit negative tone, and discriminatory behaviors based on the supposed inferiority of women (Cárdenas et al., 2010; Janos & Espinosa, 2018).

The authors of the original concept, Glick & Fiske (1996), later proposed that this construct can also be directed towards men and that it can also manifest itself in hostile and benevolent attitudes. Thus, they describe three components for both types of sexism oriented to both women and men, which are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1.
Underlying dimensions of hostile and benevolent sexism

Sexism			
Hostile towards women	Benevolent towards women	Hostile towards men	Benevolent towards men
Dominant Paternalism: Women: not fully competent adults. Need for a superior male figure.	Protective paternalism: Men: defend and care for women.	Paternalistic resentment: Women: resentment toward men for their power and status.	Maternalism: Dependence between sexes for reproduction and romantic relationships.
Competitive gender differentiation: Males: possessing the traits necessary to manage important social institutions.	Complementary gender differentiation: Women: their characteristics are complementary to male characteristics (assuming male superiority).	Compensatory gender differentiation: Women: positively differentiated from men.	Complementary gender differentiation: Women: less ambitious, dominant, and intelligent than men.
Heterosexual hostility: Women: use their sexual attractiveness to dominate men.	Heterosexual intimacy: Recognition of men's dependence on women (e.g., for reproduction).	Heterosexual hostility: Males: dominant, may sexually assault females.	Heterosexual intimacy: Women: "need" a man to be "complete".

Note: Adapted from Rodríguez, Lameiras & Carrera, (2009), and Glick & Fiske (1996).

Studies have also explored the differences in sexism by age, finding that there is high variability. Thus, sometimes it is found that there is an increase in sexism with age (Garaigordobil, 2013; Lameiras, Rodríguez & González, 2004) and sometimes the opposite (Zakrisson, Anderzén, Lenell & Sandelin, 2012). Sexism, in addition, has been related to other concepts such as life satisfaction and relationship status (Waddell, Sibley & Osborne, 2018), well-being in women (Oswald, Baalbaki & Kirkman, 2018), gender and intimate partner violence (Arnosó, Ibabe, Arnosó & Elgorriaga, 2017; Boira et al., 2017), teacher training (Carretero & Nolasco, 2019), and racism (Mateos-Jiménez, Torres-Martínez & García-Fernández, 2018), among others.

A little explored association is that between attachment and sexism. There is literature from social psychology on related topics that have evidenced that insecure attachment styles are underpinning patterns of violence (e.g., Sanchez, 2016). However, only two studies to date have been reviewed that link sexist models with the type of attachment (Garaigordobil, 2013; Yakushko, 2005). In the most recent, Garaigordobil (2013) conducted a study with

989 participants aged 18-65 years, in which it was reported that there are significant correlations between insecure attachment styles (distant and preoccupied) and sexism, as well as an increase in sexism (benevolent and ambivalent) with distant attachment in people aged 55-65 years.

The present study is based on the idea that these two subjects, attachment and sexism, are related in adulthood. It would be reductionist to think that the person learns and internalizes "just like that" the models that society presents to him/her, because before adopting a system of values and beliefs, the individual possesses an internal representation of the world from which he/she interprets and interacts with it, the so-called models of the self and the other. Therefore, insecure attachment styles may be underlying the adoption of sexist attitudes, since the early internal operating model has probably been established with a poor valuation of self and others. Consequently, the aim of the present research was to explore the possible existence of a relationship between attachment styles and sexist attitudes in both sexes.

Method

Participants

The study, of an exploratory nature, was conducted with an incidental sample of volunteer participants, engaged in public spaces and through the Internet. Inclusion criteria required that they were of legal age, up to 60 years old, and that they gave their informed consent. The exclusion criteria for the analysis of the information were: incomplete questionnaires and uncooperative attitude during the completion of the questionnaire, at the discretion of the interviewer. The questionnaire was applied during 7 months to all the people who wanted to participate, maintaining a balance in the number of women and men.

There were 1373 participants in the final sample (865 recruited directly, 508 via Google Drive), with the following characteristics: 55.4 % female vs 44.6 % male; age distribution: 18-25 years (30 %), 26-40 years (34.5 %) and 41-60 years (35.5 %). The ages of the participants were obtained directly in the specified ranges.

Instruments

A questionnaire consisting of an attachment instrument (Relationship Questionnaire [RQ], Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) and two sexism instruments were used: the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) and the Ambivalence toward Men Inventory (AMI) (Glick & Fiske, 1996), in their reduced and validated Spanish versions (Rodríguez et al., 2009).

The RQ consists of four paragraphs each describing a prototypical attachment pattern. The person fills in, on a 7-point scale, his or her level of conformity with each description, later deciding which of the four scenarios best describes him or her. The instrument allows to obtain the attachment style and to calculate the models of self and other, and the underlying anxiety and avoidance dimensions. An internal reliability of .81 has been reported among the four attachment styles of the RQ (Scharfe & Bartholomew, 1994).

As for the ASI and AMI, the versions used consist of 12 items each (6 of benevolent sexism and 6 of hostile sexism) (Rodríguez et al., 2009), whose responses range from *strongly disagree* (0 points) to *strongly agree* (5 points). An internal reliability of .83 for ASI and .79 for AMI has been reported (Rodríguez et al., 2009).

Procedure

Subjects were engaged in two ways. On the one hand, volunteers were asked to take part in public places in the city of Quito, such as parks, shopping malls and restaurants. On the other hand, the questionnaire was uploaded to Google Drive and sent via email to several recipients for dissemination. In both procedures, participants received information about the research and their rights as participants, and they were required to sign an informed consent form prior to participation. All the procedures used were approved by the Ethics Committee for Human Research of the Pontifical Catholic University of Ecuador.

Once the data had been collected, they were processed, and all incomplete questionnaires were eliminated. Descriptive statistics, median comparisons with Student's t-test, post-hoc tests, Cohen test, correlations and ANOVA, as appropriate, were used for the analysis with SPSS version 25.

Results

Attachment

It was found that 42.9 % of the participants presented secure attachment, with insecure attachment styles being the most represented (57.1 % in total): 23.9 % distant, 15 % preoccupied, and 18.2 % fearful. However, when analyzing the data by sex, it was found that 45.6 % of women presented secure attachment and 54.4 % in total presented some type of insecure attachment (distant: 23.8 %, preoccupied: 12.7 % or fearful: 17.9 %). In men, secure attachment was present in 39.5 % of the participants and insecure attachment, of one of the three types, in 60.5 %, insecure (distant: 24 %, worried: 17.8 % or fearful: 18.6 %). When comparing the results, it was found that $\chi^2(3, n=1373) = 8.81, p = .032$, which shows that the variables attachment and sex are related at a statistically significant level.

In reference to age, it was found that the percentage of secure attachment was lowest in the 18 to 25 years age group (39.6 %), 42.8 % in the 26 to 40 years age group and highest in the 41 to 60 years age group (45.8 %). In the comparison of the results by age group, it was found that $\chi^2(6, n=1373) = 13.48, p = .036$. This result highlights the relationship between the participants' attachment style and their age group.

Sexism

On the subject of sexism, the results in Table 2 show the comparative results by sex on the sexism subscales. It is observed that there are significant sex differences in all test subscales, but that the effect of the sex factor is small ($d \leq .4$).

Table 2
Sexism subscale (AMI-ASI) per sex

		Women (<i>n</i> =761)		Men (<i>n</i> =612)		<i>t</i>	<i>D</i>
		<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>		
AMI	HSM	2.59	1.01	2.38	1.05	3.690***	.2
	BSM	1.81	1.11	2.29	1.17	-7.793***	.4
ASI	HSW	2.04	1.10	2.49	1.14	-7.453***	.4
	BSW	1.99	1.30	2.42	1.18	-6.439***	.3

Note: *t*: *t* test for independent samples; *** $p < .001$; *d*: Cohen test.

It was also found that there are positive and significant correlations between the sex of the participants and the sexism subscales. As can be seen in Table 3, in both the ASI and the AMI the hostile and benevolent sexism subscales correlate statistically significantly for both male and female participants.

Table 3.
Correlations between sexism subscales of AMI and ASI per sex

		Men				Women			
		AMI		ASI		AMI		ASI	
		HSM	BSM	HSW	BSW	HSM	BSM	HSW	BSW
AMI	HSM	-	.516**	.367**	.395**	-	.475**	.426**	.449**
	BSM	.516**	-	.561**	.642**	.475**	-	.528**	.628**
ASI	HSW	.367**	.561**	-	.554**	.426**	.528**	-	.606**
	BSW	.395**	.642**	.554**	-	.449**	.628**	.606**	-

Note: Women: *n* = 761; Men: *n* = 612; ** $p < .01$.

Regarding the relationship between sexism and age, no differences between age groups and sexism subscales were detected in ANOVA tests: HSM: $F(2) = .067$; $p = .935$; BSM: $F(2) = 1.825$; $p = .162$; HSW: $F(2) = .475$; $p = .622$; BSW: $F(2) = .052$; $p = .950$.

The relationship between attachment and sexism

As a function of attachment styles. The results indicate that there are significant differences among the four attachment styles in all the sexism subscales (Table 4).

Table 4.

Descriptive statistics and analysis of variance between sexism and attachment styles

		Secure attachment		Distant attachment		Preoccupied attachment		Fearful attachment		Analysis of variance between groups
		M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	
AMI	HSM	2.39	1.08	2.45	1.07	2.57	.90	2.73	.93	$F(3, 21.64) = 6.83^{***}$
	BSM	1.91	1.15	1.91	1.18	2.23	1.11	2.28	1.15	$F(3, 37.85) = 9.52^{***}$
ASI	HSW	2.08	1.14	2.21	1.16	2.49	1.11	2.45	1.09	$F(3, 39.83) = 10.44^{***}$
	BSW	2.11	1.30	2.00	1.29	2.35	1.10	2.43	1.22	$F(3, 34.44) = 7.27^{***}$

Note: *** $p < .001$.

By means of Tukey's post-hoc test, it was shown that the differences were between the secure attachment style and the fearful and preoccupied attachment styles, in the subscales of hostile sexism toward men and toward women, and in the subscale of benevolent sexism toward men. No significant differences were found between secure attachment and distant attachment. However, distant attachment presents differences with the other insecure attachment types (fearful and preoccupied) in all sexism subscales.

According to the model of the self and the other. In general, there is a tendency for participants to have sexist attitudes (benevolent and hostile) when the model of the self is negative, both in men and women. In the model of the other there is a significant correlation, although low, only in women with respect to benevolent sexism towards men (Table 5).

Table 5.

Correlations of sexism subscales (AMI and ASI) with the self and other models (RQ) by gender

		Women (n=761)		Men (n=612)	
		Model of the Self	Model of the Other	Model of the Self	Model of the Other
AMI	HSM	-.126**	ns	-.248**	Ns
	BSM	-.172**	-.081*	-.162**	Ns
ASI	HSW	-.146**	ns	-.169**	Ns
	BSW	-.179**	ns	-.116**	Ns

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; ns: not significant.

In the analyses by sex and age (Table 6) it is observed that, in women, in the 26-40 and 41-60 age groups, the tendency is that the model of the self determines the choice of sexist models; however, in the 18-25 age group, it is the model of the other that determines the choice only of models of benevolent sexism towards men and hostile sexism towards women. In men, it is the model of the self that is underlying all types of sexism in the 18-25 and 26-40 age groups, while in the 41-60 age group, the model of the self only determines the choice of sexist models that are hostile to men.

Table 6.

Correlations of the sexism subscales (AMI and ASI) with the self and other models (RQ) by age and gender

		Women						Men					
		18-25 y. old		26-40 y. old		41-60 y. old		18-25 y. old		26-40 y. old		41-60 y. old	
		<i>Self</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Self</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Self</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Self</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Self</i>	<i>Other</i>	<i>Self</i>	<i>Other</i>
AMI	HSM	ns	ns	-.147*	ns	-.144*	ns	-.218**	ns	-.242**	ns	-.275**	ns
	BSM	ns	.168*	-.147*	ns	-.271**	ns	-.233**	ns	-.214**	ns	ns	ns
ASI	HSW	ns	.210**	Ns	ns	-.214**	ns	-.226**	ns	-.185**	ns	ns	ns
	BSW	ns	ns	-.123*	ns	-.269**	ns	-.175*	ns	-.205**	ns	ns	ns

Note: * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$; ns: not significant.

Discussion

The findings of this study in terms of attachment show that, in the population studied, insecure attachment styles as a whole are higher than secure attachment. Additionally, it was found that insecure attachments are more present in males than in females, and that they are more frequent in the age range 18 to 25 years. These results differ from those reported in other studies with non-clinical adults, in which secure attachment has been found to have a higher percentage than insecure attachments (e.g., Garrido et al., 2015; Guzmán & Contreras, 2012; Soerensen et al., 2002). However, the literature on the subject also notes that although attachment styles tend to be relatively stable, they can change over time (Magai et al., 2016). In fact, rates of around 30 % of change in attachment styles in young adults have been reported (Baldwin & Fehr, 1995) and it has been mentioned that stress plays a significant role in these changes (Cozzarelli, Karafa, Collins & Tagler, 2003). It is possible that these observations from the literature on the subject are applicable to the findings of this study.

As for the higher percentage of men with insecure attachment compared to women, other research has reported similar results, as is the case of the works of Garaigordobil (2013) and Medina, Rivera and Aguasvivas (2016). However, in the mentioned studies, it is the insecure attachment of the distant type that is more frequent in men. In this study, the insecure attachment with the highest percentage of men was preoccupied attachment, which is especially present in the 18-25 years age group. As mentioned, in preoccupied attachment there is a low model of the self, which requires constant validation from others (Griffin & Bartholomew, 1994; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2016). Therefore, it can be said that the findings of this study would indicate that the young male participants are characterized, in general, by an attachment style in which they seek approval from others, possibly due to a low self-perception of their personal worth, a search that makes them vulnerable when their needs are not satisfied.

On the other hand, it was found that secure attachment was present in a lower percentage in young adults and in a higher percentage in mature adults. However, the literature rather points out that secure attachment is more present in young people and tends to decrease as adulthood progresses, mainly due to losses of different types that this age group faces over the years (Magai et al., 2016). On the contrary, the results of this study allow us

to suggest that, in the Ecuadorian context, people become more confident as they mature, possibly because with the passage of time they gain the experience and resources to achieve certain personal, family and/or professional goals.

In relation to sexism, in a similar way to the study conducted by Lameiras et al. (2004), it was found that women have a slightly higher median than men in the subscale of hostile sexism towards them; however, in the present study it was also found that in the other subscales it is men who have the highest medians. This result reflects that, in general, women in the studied group tend to show sexist attitudes and expressions of a hostile type towards men, and men towards women; but, in addition, men show more sexist attitudes of a benevolent type towards both women and men. These findings are similar to those reported by Garaigordobil (2013) in Spain, who found the presence of significantly higher hostile and benevolent sexism scores in men.

As for the presence of significant differences in sexist attitudes by sociodemographic variables, it was found that the sex of the participants had a significant value in the expression of this type of attitudes, but not age, a variable in which no statistically significant scores were found. These findings are also similar to those previously reported by Garaigordobil (2013).

According to the objective of the present research, which was to explore the possible existence of a relationship between attachment styles and sexist attitudes in men and women, statistically significant differences were found between the two dimensions of sexism in both sexes (hostile and benevolent towards men and women) and the four attachment styles (secure, distant, preoccupied, fearful). When identifying, by means of post-hoc tests, between which groups the differences are present, it was found that secure attachment differed from fearful and/or preoccupied attachment in the dimensions of hostile and benevolent sexism towards men and in the dimension of hostile sexism towards women, which highlights the relationship that is present in the population under study, between insecure attachment styles and sexism in both sexes, a relationship that was previously reported by Garaigordobil (2013).

Although no relationships between secure and distant attachment were recorded in any of the sexism dimensions in both men and women, it was found that distant attachment presented significant differences with the other types of insecure attachment (fearful and/or worried) in all dimensions of sexism. This finding makes sense in terms of the model of the self, which is adequate in the distant attachment and deficient in the preoccupied and fearful attachment styles. In fact, the problem in the distant attachment style is the negative expectations about the response of others, hence people with this type of attachment avoid proximity to others. In contrast, in the preoccupied and fearful styles the problem is precisely the inadequacy of the model of the self.

This last statement was confirmed by correlating the dimensions of sexism with the models of the self and of the other, a procedure in which it was found that when the model of the self is negative, there is a tendency for participants of both sexes to present both benevolent and hostile sexist attitudes towards men and women.

Conclusions

From the achieved results, it is concluded that, in both women and men in the population under study, a low model of the self-shows high expectations of others in terms of availability and support, which could predispose them to report sexist attitudes. In women, these attitudes are presented more in terms of hostile sexism (paternalistic resentment/dominant paternalism, compensatory/competitive gender differentiation and heterosexual hostility), and in men of both types, as scores are also high in benevolent sexism characterized by maternalistic/paternalistic styles of complementary gender differentiation, and heterosexual intimacy in terms of “need” or dependency.

In conclusion, it can be stated that although attachment styles do not predict the choice of sexist models, this study found that people who have not internalized an adequate sense of their own value (model of self) have a tendency to report sexist attitudes (benevolent and hostile) towards both sexes.

The results obtained are important from several points of view. First, it has been possible to obtain precise data on attachment and sexism in Ecuador, where research on these topics is scarce and insufficient. Expanding knowledge on these issues allows us to know what aspects should be addressed with diverse groups of people, since insecure attachment is linked to various mental health situations and, therefore, should be considered in prevention programs. The data obtained on sexism, on the other hand, help to understand one of the phenomena underlying social violence (intimate partner violence, domestic violence and femicide). The in-depth study of these issues in future research will allow, in the long term, to have an impact on mental health policies at the local level.

With respect to the limitations of the present study, one of them is that it only included participants from the city of Quito, which restricts the possibility of generalizing the results. Furthermore, it is a limitation to have used an attachment instrument that works with four composite scenarios, because it was difficult for older participants to understand the mechanism, which led to the discarding of the surveys of subjects over 60 years of age from the sample. For future research, the use of an attachment instrument with items to measure the diverse types of attachment is recommended.

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