



# Perceived Parental Violence, Sexism, and Attitudes towards Dating Violence against Women

## *Algılanan Ebeveyn Şiddeti, Cinsiyetçilik ve Kadına Yönelik Flört Şiddetine İlişkin Tutumlar*

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### ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between perceived parental violence during childhood, sexist attitudes towards women and the attitudes towards dating violence perpetrated by men. For this purpose, data were collected from 351 (201 female, 150 male) university students aged 18-28. A battery of scales including the Attitudes towards Dating Violence Scale, Ambivalent Sexism Scale, and questions about physical and psychological violence from their parents during childhood were administered to the participants. Three different hierarchical regression analyzes were conducted to determine the predictors of participants' attitudes towards physical, psychological and sexual dating violence. The results of the analysis indicated that male university students' attitudes towards physical, psychological, and sexual dating violence were more positive than female students. Parental violence that the participants experienced during their childhood predicted their attitudes towards sexual dating violence positively. When the relationship between sexist attitudes and attitudes towards dating violence was examined, hostile sexism towards women positively predicted positive attitudes towards psychological, physical, and sexual dating violence. On the other hand, benevolent sexism towards women positively predicted positive attitudes towards physical dating violence. In conclusion, the findings remark to the role of sexist attitudes towards women and perceived parental violence in childhood on positive attitudes towards dating violence. Determining the variables that predict attitudes towards dating violence seems important for intervention studies aiming to prevent dating violence in romantic relationships.

**Keywords:** parental violence, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, attitudes towards dating violence.

### ÖZ

Bu çalışmanın amacı, üniversite öğrencilerinin çocukluk döneminde ebeveynlerinden gördükleri şiddetin ve kadına yönelik cinsiyetçi tutumlarının erkeğin kadına uyguladığı flört şiddetine yönelik tutumları ile ilişkilerini incelemektir. Bu amaçla 18-28 yaş aralığındaki 351 (201'i kadın, 150'si erkek) üniversite öğrencisinden veri toplanmıştır. Katılımcılara Flört Şiddetine Yönelik Tutum Ölçeği, Çelişik Duygulu Cinsiyetçilik Ölçeği ve çocukluk döneminde ebeveynlerinden gördükleri fiziksel ve psikolojik şiddete yönelik soruların yer aldığı bir ölçek bataryası uygulanmıştır. Katılımcıların fiziksel, psikolojik ve cinsel flört şiddetine yönelik tutumlarının yordayıcılarını belirlemek için üç ayrı hiyerarşik regresyon analizi yürütülmüştür. Bulgular, erkek üniversite öğrencilerinin fiziksel, psikolojik ve cinsel flört şiddetine yönelik tutumlarının kadın üniversite öğrencilerine kıyasla daha olumlu olduğunu göstermiştir. Katılımcıların çocukluk döneminde ebeveynlerinden gördükleri şiddet, cinsel flört şiddetine yönelik olumsuz tutumları olumlu yönde yordamıştır. Cinsiyetçi tutumların flört şiddetine yönelik tutumlar ile ilişkisi incelendiğinde, kadına yönelik düşmanca cinsiyetçiliğin psikolojik, fiziksel ve cinsel flört şiddetine yönelik olumsuz tutumları; kadına yönelik korumacı cinsiyetçiliğin ise fiziksel flört şiddetine yönelik olumsuz tutumları olumlu yönde yordadığı bulunmuştur. Sonuç olarak bulgular, kadına yönelik cinsiyetçi tutumların ve çocukluk döneminde görülen ebeveyn şiddetinin flört şiddetine yönelik olumsuz tutumlar üzerindeki rolüne dikkat çekmektedir. Flört şiddetine yönelik tutumları yordayan değişkenlerin belirlenmesi, romantik ilişkilerdeki flört şiddetini önlemeyi amaçlayan müdahale çalışmaları için önemli görünmektedir.

**Anahtar sözcükler:** ebeveyn şiddeti, düşmanca cinsiyetçilik, korumacı cinsiyetçilik, flört şiddeti tutumları

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## Introduction

Dating violence is a prevalent and universal issue among adolescents and emerging adults (Chan et al. 2008, WHO 2010). Romantic relationships may host three different types of violence: physical, psychological, and sexual violence (Price et al. 1999, Teten et al. 2009). Interestingly, the young perceive psychological violence in dating relationships as more acceptable than other types of violence (Price et al. 1999); yet, previous research (e.g., Meekers et al. 2013) demonstrated that physical violence often accompanies psychological violence and that one is most likely to witness other types as well if the relationship hosts one type of violence. Thus, the young should feel safe with their partners, not only physically but also psychologically.

Hossain et al. (2020) investigated 16 systematic reviews and meta-analysis studies on violence among youth (adolescents and emerging adults). Accordingly, they concluded the prevalence of physical violence among the emerging adults to be between 0.1%-57.5%, the prevalence of sexual violence to be between 0.1%-64.6%, and the prevalence of psychological violence to be between 4.2%-97%. In another study with 500 undergraduate students in Turkey, 88% of women reported being exposed to emotional (psychological), 19.4% to physical violence, and 7.8% to sexual violence (Dikmen et al. 2018). A recent and comprehensive qualitative study carried out through focus group interviews in Turkey concluded that the participants dating violence behaviors they experienced or witnessed the most were related to emotional violence, followed by sexual and physical violence (Eşlek et al. 2021). Despite varying rates reported in previous research due to differences in the definition and measurement of dating violence, the findings raise alarming concerns about dating violence. Besides, being a victim of dating violence is often associated with numerous problems such as depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, substance abuse, suicidal thoughts or attempts, school problems, and repeated victimization (Teten et al. 2009). Moreover, dating violence may result in the victim's death in more severe cases (Catalano et al. 2009).

The previous findings revealed exposure to childhood violence to be associated with violence against the partner in an intimate relationship (Jin et al. 2007, White and Widom 2003). Social learning theory (Bandura 1973) proposes that violence and aggression can be acquired through observing others. From this perspective, exposure to violence at an early age may be a robust risk factor for violence in dating relationships. Many studies (e.g., Abramsky et al. 2011, White and Widom 2003) demonstrated that risk factors, such as exposure to childhood abuse and/or growing up with domestic violence, predict both being a victim of dating violence and perpetrating violence in youth. To put it another way, exposure to childhood violence becomes a significant risk factor for experiencing violence in a dating relationship in later years. A meta-analysis study (Park and Kim 2018) investigating the relationship between family and social environment factors and violence experiences in a dating relationship suggested that witnessing domestic violence and deviant peer relationships may be the strongest predictors of being a victim and perpetrator of

violence, respectively. In another study, it was found that males with aggressive friends tend to accept physical and sexual violence in a dating relationship (Price et al. 1999).

Dating violence is also closely related to sexist attitudes. Sexism includes attitudes exaggerating the biological and social role differences between men and women and giving the superior status and power-associated positions to men by pushing women to a inferior position (Sakallı-Uğurlu 2003). According to Glick and Fiske (1996), sexist attitudes encompass considerable ambivalence, since women and men need each other for their reproductive and sexual needs. In this respect, the nature of their relationship seems different from the nature of other intergroup relationships in society. On the other hand, there is an apparent status difference between men and women, as in other intergroup relations. The ambivalent sexism theory argues that the interdependent but power differences-based relationships between the sexes lead to ambivalence toward gender groups (Glick and Fiske 1996). Therefore, traditional attitudes toward women always cover ambivalence with both hostile and benevolent components. Hostile sexism toward women includes considering women inferior than men by social status and hatred against those not conforming to traditional gender roles or challenging the dominance of men (Gaunt 2013, Sakallı-Uğurlu 2003). Benevolent sexism toward women, on the other hand, encompasses seemingly more positive and caring attitudes, emphasizing that women need to be glorified, protected, and enjoy relevant resources to be provided by men (Gaunt 2013). While the latter may seemingly appear positive, the implicit assumptions associated with the beliefs in the approach may harm women. For example, benevolent sexism assumes that women are more incompetent and weaker than men. In addition, since benevolent sexism in sexist societies makes it difficult for women to perceive gender-based inequality as a problem, it contributes to women's acceptance of these negative views and, thus, to the survival of gender inequality (Glick and Fiske 2001).

Previous research showed that the level of sexism is highly linked with aggressive behaviors toward women and the tendency to legitimize such behaviors. For example, hostile sexism among males was previously reported to predict rape intention (Abrams et al. 2003) and willingness to hit the partner (Glick et al. 2002). Benevolent sexism, on the other hand, predicts the tendency to blame the victim if the victim has initiated the contact in rape (Abrams et al. 2003). Overall, it can confidently be asserted that family life in childhood and sexist attitudes are key determinants of dating violence.

It is well-known that attitudes predict future behaviors (Kraus, 1995), and attitudes toward dating violence were also shown to be related to perpetrating and experiencing violence in a dating relationship (De Puy et al. 2014, Price et al. 1999). Thinking that violence is a valuable means to achieve the desired outcomes (i.e., violence-accepting attitudes) paves the way for violence to the partner in a dating relationship (Foshee et al. 1999). In this regard, exposure to domestic violence in childhood was reported to be associated with developing violence-accepting attitudes in

later years (Slovak et al., 2007). However, women and men often differ in the intensity of attitudes accepting dating violence. The literature revealed that men find all three types of dating violence more acceptable than women (Price et al. 1999). It was also shown that men who accept physical and sexual violence against women tend to use violence against their partners (Bookwala et al. 1992). In addition, it is well-documented that men advocating traditional female roles regarding gender roles are more inclined to behave aggressively toward their partners (Byers and Eno 1992).

One's persistence in a relationship where they are the victim of violence can be attributed to their violence-welcoming attitude. Perceptions that partner violence is all acceptable are related to being abused or exposed to violence by parents or witnessing interparental violence (Foshee et al. 1999). For example, a study with female adolescents that reported witnessing interparental violence in their childhood (Lee et al. 2016) concluded a positive and significant relationship between witnessing childhood violence and welcoming attitudes toward violence from partners, which was mediated by automatic thoughts that closeness might be destructive. In other words, a child witnessing their father's violence against their mother forms schemas that link relationships with the phenomenon of being harmed, followed by violence-accepting attitudes in their dating relationship(s). In addition to domestic violence, attitudes toward traditional gender roles are also expected to expound persistence in a relationship with a risk of violence. For example, Lee et al. (2016) found negative attitudes toward women (hostile sexism) among female adolescents witnessing interparental violence to be associated with accepting violence in dating relationships.

In a Turkey-based study (Sakallı-Uğurlu and Ulu 2003), the researchers found hostile sexism among men to predict attitudes toward verbal and physical violence against their partners in marital relationships. The findings of the same study for the female sample showed that hostile and benevolent sexism among women predicted attitudes toward verbal violence, not physical violence. Accordingly, hostile sexism in men is associated with supporting verbal and physical violence against the partner, while hostile and protective sexism among women is associated with attitudes welcoming verbal violence from the partner. Similarly, Dossil et al. (2020) also showed that the participating women with high victimization in verbal/emotional violence, but not in physical violence, adopted more benevolent and hostile sexist thoughts compared to the others.

It is often uttered that it is critical to distinguish the perpetrator from the victim in the case of dating violence and that, not surprisingly, gender is the key distinguishing factor (Lewis and Fremouw 2001). Both women and men can be exposed to dating violence, but empirical research reported that women are more severely harmed than men (e.g., receiving more severe injuries) in dating violence (Arias and Johnson 1989, Makepeace 1986). In this study, we investigated the predictors of male-to-female dating violence since it often results in more adverse consequences.

The literature hosts studies documenting that men tend to justify violence against women more (Price et al. 1999, Rani and Bonu 2009). Therefore, we expected men to have more positive attitudes toward dating violence than women. As stated above, gender is a significant factor in identifying attitudes toward violence; therefore, we controlled the effect of gender while exploring violence-related attitudes. Ultimately, we attempted to examine the predictors of men's affirmative attitudes toward psychological, physical, and sexual dating violence within exposure to parental psychological and physical violence and sexist attitudes toward women (benevolent and hostile sexism) after statistically controlling for the effect of gender. Accordingly, exposure to parental violence and sexist attitudes were expected to predict attitudes toward dating violence when controlling for the effect of gender. Due to the lack of research investigating attitudes toward dating violence in Turkey, we believe that our findings would bring valuable contributions to the literature on intimate relationships and encourage further studies on the subject.

## Methods

### Sample

A total of 351 undergraduate students aged 18-28 years and enrolled at Mersin University participated in the research. Among them, 57% (n = 201) were females, and 43% (n = 150) were males. The mean age of the participants was found to be 21.57 years ( $SD = 2.23$ ). The only inclusion criterion was determined as "having had a romantic relationship at least once." About half (49%, n = 172) of the participants reported being in a romantic relationship currently, while 50% (n = 177) were not currently engaged in a romantic relationship. Yet, 1% (n = 2) did not specify their current relationship status. Finally, 1% (n = 4) of the participants were preparatory class students, 34% (n = 120) were freshmen, 23% (n = 81) were sophomores, 23% (n = 120) were juniors, and 13% (n = 45) were seniors. However, 4% (n = 14) did not specify their year of study.

## Materials

### Demographic Information Form

We created a demographic information form to collect and evaluate the participants' demographic characteristics, such as age, gender, and dating relationship status.

### Ambivalent Sexism Inventory

We collected the data on the participants' sexist attitudes using the 22-item Ambivalent Sexism Inventory developed by Glick and Fiske (1996) and adapted into Turkish by Sakallı-Uğurlu (2002). The adaptation study reported the internal consistency coefficients of the tool with two subscales to be .87 and .78 for hostile sexism (sample item: "Women seek power by gaining control over men.") and benevolent sexism (sample item: "In a disaster, women need not be rescued first."), respectively. The responses in this inventory are scored on a 6-point Likert-type

scale (1 = “strongly disagree,” 6 = “strongly agree”). High scores on the inventory indicate high levels of hostile and benevolent sexism. In this study, we calculated the reliability coefficients to be .91 and .86 for hostile sexism and protective sexism, respectively.

### The Attitudes Towards Dating Violence Scales (ATDVS)

We utilized the 39-item ATDVS (Price et al. 1999) to evaluate the participants’ attitudes toward dating violence. The scale is composed of three separate scales considered sub-scales of the whole scale: physical violence (sample item: “It is never O.K for a guy to hit his girlfriend.”), psychological violence (sample item: “It is understandable when a guy gets to angry that he yells at his girlfriend.”), and sexual violence (sample item: “A guy should not touch his girlfriend unless she wants to be touched.”). The responses to the items are scored on a 7-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The original study reported the internal consistency coefficients to range between .83 and .87 for the sub-scales.

### Exploratory and Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results for the ATDVS:

In this study, we attempted to adapt the ADVS into Turkish and performed exploratory and confirmatory factor analyses to uncover its factorial structure. Worthington and Whittaker (2006) suggested that the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) value should be higher than .60, and the result of Bartlett’s test of sphericity should be statistically significant to be able to perform factor analysis on a data set. The relevant analyses yielded a KMO value of .91 and the result of Bartlett’s test of sphericity to be statistically significant ( $\chi^2 = 6803.417, p < .001$ ). Next, we initially performed exploratory factor analysis (EFA) for the scale using the Varimax rotation technique. The results revealed an 8-factor structure with an eigenvalue higher than one and explaining 64% of the variance. Since the original scale was three-factorial, we decided to replicate the analysis to obtain that three-factor structure. In the repeated analysis, we got a three-factorial structure with an eigenvalue greater than one and explaining 47% of the total variance. Given the distribution of the items, we discovered that some were clustered under factors other than their original factors. Considering varying attitudes toward dating violence by culture, we re-examined and excluded the items loaded into different factors other than the factors emerging in the original study (items 3, 4, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 14, and 15 on psychological violence; items 16, 18, 20, and 22 on physical violence; items 29, 30, 31, 32, and 39 on sexual violence). Ultimately, we evaluated the participants’ attitudes toward dating violence with a total of 21 items (six on psychological violence, eight on physical violence, and seven on sexual violence). The factors finally explained 55% of the total variance, and the items’ factor loadings ranged from .44 to .85. Finally, we calculated Cronbach’s alpha coefficients to be .79, .89, and .82 for the mentioned subscales, respectively (Table 1).

The EFA-suggested factorial structure was confirmed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) on the LISREL 8.51 program. We considered the fit indices RMSEA, AGFI, CFI, GFI, and  $\chi^2/df$  to evaluate the model-data fit. As a rule of thumb, CFI and

GFI values of .90 and above, an AGFI value of .85 and above, an RMSEA value lower than .08, and a  $\chi^2/df$  value lower than 3 indicate an acceptable model-data fit (Hu and Bentler 1999). The findings demonstrated that the items were loaded into the factors, as discovered in EFA. Moreover, the fit indices of the model tested were found to be within acceptable limits with the adjustments suggested by the program and theoretically deemed appropriate ( $\chi^2 [177, N=351] = 515.02, \chi^2/df = 2.91, RMSEA = .07, GFI = .88, AGFI = .84, CFI = .90$ ).

**Perceived Parental Violence in Childhood:** Considering similar practices in the literature (e.g., Thoresen et al. 2015), we designed a four-question form to explore whether the participants experienced physical and psychological parental violence in their childhood. The questions were asked separately for the mother and the father (sample questions: “Did you experience physical violence by your mother/father in your childhood?” and “Did you experience psychological violence (threat, insult, humiliation) by your mother/father in your childhood?”). Participants responded to these questions on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always). It was found that the four questions asked to measure perceived parental violence showed high correlations with each other, ranging from .42 to .71. We calculated the internal consistency coefficient to be .85 for the form. A high score on the form indicates a high level of perceived parental violence in childhood.

**Table 1. Variances, eigenvalues, alpha coefficients, and factor loadings of the ASTDV**

Item No.	Factor 1: Psychological violence	Factor 2:	Faktör 3: Cinsel şiddet
1	.66		
2	.64		
3	.73		
4	.58		
5	.77		
6	.73		
7			
8			
9		.62	
10		.83	
11		.82	
12		.85	
13		.67	
14		.84	
15			.72
16			.75
17			.69
18			.72
19			.44
20			.60
21			.64
Explained variance	22.48%	16.62%	15.71%
Eigenvalue	6.84	2.75	1.93
$\alpha$	.79	.89	.82

**Procedure**

The Social and Human Sciences Ethics Committee of Mersin University granted ethical approval to our study (No. 108 dated 03.29.2022). Then, we randomly determined the departments and halls where we would collect the data. It took about 15-20 minutes for the participants to fill out the instruments.

**Statistical Analysis**

We analyzed the data on the IBM SPSS 21.0 and LISREL 8.51 (Jöreskog and Sorbom 1993) programs. First off, we checked the assumptions of multicollinearity, normality, and linearity to be able to perform parametric analyses. Except for attitudes toward sexual dating violence, the skewness-kurtosis values of all other variables were found to fall within the range of  $\pm 1.96$  suggested by Field (2009). Despite the relatively high kurtosis value of attitude toward sexual dating violence (2.67), it was also considered to be within acceptable limits due to being lower than  $\pm 7$  (West et al. 1995). Moreover, we tested multicollinearity considering the tolerance and variance inflation factor (VIF) values. In the literature, it is often recommended that a tolerance value be lower than .10 and a VIF value be lower than 10 (Field 2009). Accordingly, we found the tolerance and VIF values to be within acceptable limits in this study, implying no multicollinearity. After discovering that the mentioned assumptions were satisfied, we subjected the data set to a correlation analysis to reveal the relationships between the variables. Then, we performed three separate hierarchical regression analyses with three steps in line with the purpose of the research.

**Results**

The present study attempted to determine the predictors of undergraduate students' attitudes toward dating violence. In this sense, we investigated the relationship of attitudes affirming dating violence with exposure to parental violence in childhood and hostile and benevolent sexism toward women. Table 2 presents detailed information about the research sample and variables.

Table 3 demonstrates the correlations between the research variables. The findings showed that while parental violence in childhood had a positive and significant relationship with affirmative attitudes toward sexual dating violence ( $r = .13, p < .01$ ), it was not related to affirmative attitudes toward physical and psychological dating violence. Moreover, hostile sexism toward women was positively correlated with affirmative

attitudes toward psychological ( $r = .27, p < .01$ ), physical ( $r = .53, p < .01$ ), and sexual ( $r = .43, p < .01$ ) dating violence. Finally, benevolent sexism toward women was found to be positively associated with affirmative attitudes toward physical ( $r = .42, p < .01$ ) and sexual ( $r = .18, p < .01$ ) dating violence.

We performed three different hierarchical regression analyses on the data to uncover the predictors of undergraduate students' affirmative attitudes toward psychological, physical, and sexual dating violence. While gender was included in the model as a control variable in the first step, we entered perceived parental violence in childhood into the equation. In the last step, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism were included in the model. After controlling for gender, we followed this order in hierarchical regression analyses as we ultimately aimed to test whether adverse childhood experiences and sexist attitudes could predict attitudes affirming dating violence.

The results of the first hierarchical regression analysis showed that the gender variable included in the model in the first step explained 8% of the variance in affirmative attitudes toward psychological dating violence ( $F_{(1, 314)} = 25.61, \beta = .28, p < .001$ ). Accordingly, the male participants had higher affirmative attitudes toward psychological dating violence than their female counterparts. Perceived parental violence in childhood included in the model in the second step did not make a significant contribution to explaining the variance in affirmative attitudes toward psychological dating violence ( $F_{(2, 313)} = 12.99, p > .05$ ). Yet, hostile and protective sexism toward women included in the model in the last step brought an additional 2% significant contribution to the variance in affirmative attitudes toward psychological dating violence. Considering the variables' contributions to the model separately, we discovered that hostile sexism toward women ( $\beta = .22, p < .01$ ) significantly predicted affirmative attitudes toward psychological dating violence. The final step of the analysis showed that all variables together explained about 9% of the variance in the participants' affirmative attitudes toward psychological dating violence ( $F_{(4, 311)} = 8.74, p < .05$ ) (Table 4).

The second hierarchical regression analysis tested the predictors of the participants' affirmative attitudes toward physical dating violence. The findings revealed that when included in the model as a control variable in the first step, gender significantly explained 10% of the variance in affirmative attitudes toward physical dating violence ( $F_{(1, 309)} = 32.29, \beta = .31, p < .001$ ). Accordingly, the male participants had significantly higher affirmative attitudes

**Table 2. Means and standard deviations of the variables**

	N	M	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Parental violence in childhood	351	7.93	4.05	.82	1.13
Hostile sexism toward women	351	38.20	16.94	-.89	.20
Benevolent sexism toward women	351	38.63	15.44	-.90	-.02
Affirmative attitudes toward psychological dating violence	351	14.63	8.53	.39	1.08
Affirmative attitudes toward physical dating violence	351	21.69	13.21	-.49	.73
Affirmative attitudes toward sexual dating violence	351	12.66	7.71	2.67	1.70

toward physical dating violence than the female participants. In the second step, parental violence included in the regression equation brought no significant contribution to the variance in affirmative attitudes towards physical dating violence ( $F_{(2, 308)} = 16.52, p > .05$ ). However, we found that hostile and benevolent sexism toward women included in the model in the last step contributed an additional 22% to the variance in affirmative attitudes toward physical dating violence ( $F_{(4, 306)} = 35.15, p < .001$ ). Considering the variables separately, both hostile ( $\beta = .37, p < .01$ ) and benevolent sexism ( $\beta = .23, p < .01$ ) significantly contributed to the model. This finding implies that the more hostile and benevolent sexism the participants had, the more affirmative attitudes toward physical dating violence they adopted. All variables together explained about 32% of the variance in the participating undergraduate students' affirmative attitudes toward physical dating violence (Table 5).

In the last hierarchical regression analysis to investigate the predictors of the participants' affirmative attitudes towards sexual dating violence, gender was found to significantly explain 16% of the variance in affirmative attitudes toward sexual dating violence ( $F_{(1, 312)} = 59.88, \beta = .40, p < .001$ ). Thus, it can be asserted that the male participants had more affirmative attitudes toward sexual dating violence than the female participants. Moreover, parental violence in childhood included in the model in the second step only made a significant contribution of 1% to the variance in the model ( $F_{(2, 311)} = 32.29, p < .05$ ). Accordingly, parental violence

( $\beta = .11, p < .001$ ) significantly predicted affirmative attitudes toward sexual dating violence. Finally, hostile and benevolent sexism toward women brought a significant contribution of 6% to the variance in the model in the last step ( $F_{(4, 309)} = 23.31, p < .001$ ). Nevertheless, it was discovered that only hostile sexism toward women ( $\beta = .30, p < .001$ ) had a positive and significant relationship with affirmative attitudes toward sexual dating violence. Overall, all the variables together explained about 23% of the variance in the participants' affirmative attitudes toward sexual dating violence (Table 6).

## Discussion

The present research aimed to determine the predictors of undergraduate students' attitudes toward dating violence against women. In this respect, we tested whether gender, parental violence in childhood, and hostile and benevolent sexism toward women predict attitudes toward dating violence. The findings revealed that gender significantly predicted attitudes toward psychological, physical, and sexual dating violence. Accordingly, the male participants adopted affirmative attitudes toward all three types of dating violence more than their female peers, which partially overlaps with the previous findings. In their study, Anderson et al. (2011) showed that the male and female participants differed not in attitudes toward male-perpetrated physical and sexual violence but in attitudes toward psychological dating violence and that the males had more common affirmative

**Table 3. Correlation coefficients between the research variables**

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1. Parental violence in childhood	-					
2. Hostile sexism toward women	.16**	-				
3. Benevolent sexism toward women	.11*	.51**	-			
4. Affirmative attitudes toward psychological dating violence	-.02	.27**	.07	-		
5. Affirmative attitudes toward physical dating violence	.09	.53**	.42**	.31**	-	
6. Affirmative attitudes toward sexual dating violence	.13*	.43**	.18**	.39**	.51**	-

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

**Table 4. Results of the hierarchical regression analysis for affirmative attitudes toward psychological dating violence**

Variables	Affirmative Attitudes Toward Psychological Dating Violence			
	B	SH	$\beta$	t
<b>1. Step</b>				
Gender	4.736	.936	.28	<b>5.060**</b>
<b>2. Step</b>				
Gender	4.824	.947	.28	<b>5.095**</b>
Parental violence in childhood	-.075	.117	-.04	-.643
<b>3. Step</b>				
Gender	3.078	1.113	.18	<b>2.765*</b>
Parental violence in childhood	-.102	.116	-.05	-.881
Hostile sexism toward women	.105	.037	.22	<b>2.867*</b>
Benevolent sexism toward women	-.037	.034	-.07	-1.061

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .001$

attitudes toward psychological dating violence. In another study, Price et al. (1999) found that men approved of all three types of dating violence more than women. Our findings confirmed that gender predicts attitudes toward physical, psychological, and sexual dating violence. In another study testing the predictive effect of gender on various types of violence against intimate partners (Nabors et al. 2006), the male participants were found to be more likely to affirm physical and sexual violence than the female participants; however, gender was not a significant predictor of affirming verbal violence. In the same study, the researchers found that gender also predicted beliefs serving to legitimize violence and that men were more likely to affirm violence-justifying myths than women. Our findings overlap with the studies in the literature in that men affirm dating violence against women more than women. In some cultures, children are raised with gender stereotypes assuming that men are more competent and proficient than women and, therefore, have the right to rule, control, and oppress women. However, the desire of men at the top of the social hierarchy to maintain the status quo and their advantageous position may cause their attitudes

toward dating violence against women to be more affirmative than women that are the victims of the system.

We expected perceived parental violence in childhood to predict attitudes toward dating violence. Accordingly, our findings demonstrated that perceived parental violence significantly predicted attitudes affirming sexual dating violence after controlling for gender. In this regard, attitudes affirming sexual dating violence increased as perceived parental violence in childhood increased. Speizer (2010) reported that men and women witnessing their fathers' physical violence against their mothers tended to adopt attitudes affirming the man's beating his wife. Similarly, we also showed that parental violence in childhood positively related with positive attitudes toward male sexual violence against women in intimate relationships.

The literature hosts studies documenting that childhood violence in the family turns into violence against the partner in adulthood through intergenerational transmission, which feeds the cycle of violence (Simons and Johnson 1998). For example, Copp et al. (2016) found that witnessing interparental violence

**Tablo 5. Results of the hierarchical regression analysis of affirmative attitudes toward physical dating violence**

Variables	Affirmative Attitudes Toward Physical Dating Violence			
	B	SH	$\beta$	t
<b>1. Step</b>				
Gender	8.329	1.466	.31	<b>5.682**</b>
<b>2. Step</b>				
Gender	8.130	1.484	.30	<b>5.480**</b>
Parental violence in childhood	.161	.183	.05	.879
<b>3. Step</b>				
Gender	2.042	1.548	.08	1.319
Parental violence in childhood	-.002	.161	-.00	-.012
Hostile sexism toward women	.292	.051	.37	<b>5.753**</b>
Benevolent sexism toward women	.194	.048	.23	<b>4.050**</b>

\*\*p < .001

**Tablo 6. Results of the hierarchical regression analysis of affirmative attitudes toward sexual dating violence**

Variables	Affirmative Attitudes Toward Sexual Dating Violence			
	B	SH	$\beta$	t
<b>1. Step</b>				
Gender	6.263	.809	.40	<b>7.738**</b>
<b>2. Step</b>				
Gender	6.025	.814	.39	<b>7.401**</b>
Parental violence in childhood	.203	.100	.11	<b>2.024*</b>
<b>3. Step</b>				
Gender	3.626	.938	.23	<b>3.865**</b>
Parental violence in childhood	.155	.098	.08	1.589
Hostile sexism toward women	.136	.031	.30	<b>4.353**</b>
Benevolent sexism toward women	-.010	.029	-.02	-.358

\*p < .05, \*\*p < .001

and being exposed to parental violence positively predicted attitudes affirming dating violence. Partially overlapping with these findings, our results demonstrated that perceived parental violence positively predicted attitudes affirming sexual dating violence against women but not those affirming psychological and physical violence. Although we did not explore the mediators of the relationship between parental violence in childhood and developing attitudes promoting sexual violence in intimate relationships, the findings support the previous literature (e.g., Copp et al. 2016) showing that violence by parents that are considered close relationship figures in childhood can promote beliefs normalizing violence in intimate relationships. These beliefs may be transferred to intimate relationships in later years. Being abused by parents seems to make it challenging to develop expectations that a relationship should be free of sexual violence and well-maintained in their post-adolescent romantic relationships.

A surprising finding in this study was that perceived childhood parental violence did not predict attitudes affirming psychological and physical dating violence. Comparing the participants' mean scores on attitudes toward the three types of violence, we discovered that the participants had significantly more negative attitudes toward sexual violence than other types of violence. In other words, the participants found sexual violence against women more marginal and unacceptable than physical or psychological violence. One possible reason why perceived parental violence in childhood did not predict attitudes toward physical and psychological dating violence may be attributed to increased awareness of psychological and physical violence thanks to education. Yet, further studies are needed to test this finding on different samples with low educational attainment or awareness of violence.

When controlling for gender and perceived parental violence, we concluded that while hostile sexism toward women significantly predicted attitudes affirming psychological, physical, and sexual violence, benevolent sexism toward women significantly predicted attitudes affirming physical violence against women. Therefore, hostile and protective sexism toward women can be considered key factors explaining attitudes affirming dating violence against women.

The previous research documented that beliefs about traditional gender roles are a predictor of supporting male violence against his intimate partner (Crossman et al. 1990, Haj Yahia 2003, Yoshihama et al. 2014). Unlike these findings, we adopted a multidimensional perspective on attitudes toward women and dating violence. Accordingly, we found that hostile sexism predicted attitudes affirming physical, psychological, and sexual violence against the partner in a close relationship. Hostile sexism advocating that men should always be superior to women brings with it the approval of the man's use of psychological, physical, and sexual violence against his female partner. In addition, this study suggested that benevolent sexism significantly predicted attitudes affirming physical violence against a female partner. This finding, thus, indicates that

benevolent sexism with the belief that women are more delicate and, therefore, should be protected and glorified by men may also have a function legitimizing one's physical violence against his female partner. It also promotes the idea that benevolent sexism - an argument of the ambivalent sexism theory - includes social acceptances put forward to whitewash hostile sexism, support male dominance, and mostly harm women (Sakallı-Uğurlu 2003). Hostile sexism includes punishing women who do not conform to traditional women's roles, while protective sexism rewards women adapting to traditional roles (Forbes et al. 2006). However, the "protective" shield of benevolent sexism on women seems to disappear when they do not behave traditionally. In addition, our findings that hostile sexism predicted all attitudes toward dating violence while benevolent sexism only predicted attitudes toward physical dating violence may be since benevolent sexism paints anti-equality attitudes toward women in a "positive" color.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, this study draws attention to two seminal aspects of the subject. First, although the findings suggested that perceived parental violence initially predicted affirmative attitudes toward sexual dating violence, its significance disappeared when including sexist attitudes in the model. In this respect, it may be proposed that beliefs about traditional women's roles taught socially may be a more important factor in explaining attitudes affirming dating violence against women than parental violence in childhood. The mentioned finding expands the focus of explanations regarding individuals' acquiring attitudes affirming and accepting violence in close relationships, from adverse family experiences to social learning in the context of gender roles. In practice, it seems that there is a need for interventions to improve parenting quality to prevent future youth from normalizing dating violence, as well as more comprehensive interventions to enable present and future youth to internalize gender equality. In addition, introducing social policies aiming at gender equality seems critical in alleviating the attitudes affirming dating violence among the young and, thus, the acceptability of violence in romantic relationships.

The second noteworthy implication of the present study highlights the reduction of not only hostile attitudes toward women but also benevolent attitudes in coping with dating violence. The social acceptance that women are delicate, innocent, and need to be protected both prescribe how women should act and assign men to supervise it (Sakallı and Türkoğlu 2009). Thus, benevolent attitudes toward women go together with those promoting physical violence against the female partner. In this regard, it is considered critical that both the youth-oriented social policies and psycho-education embed reducing hostile and benevolent attitudes toward women in their goals in dealing with violence against women.

This study is not free of a few limitations. First, we could retrospectively measure parental violence in childhood only through a question designed to evaluate the mother and father. In



future studies, measuring parental violence in childhood through a scale with a number of items may contribute to the reliability of the measurement. The cross-sectional design can be considered another limitation of the present study. The nature of cross-sectional design does not allow for mentioning causal inferences about the relationships between variables. Yet, further research employing longitudinal measurements on the subject may allow for making causal inferences about the impact of parental violence in childhood and sexist attitudes toward women on affirmative attitudes toward psychological dating violence.

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