

# Teachers' Explanations of Adolescent to Parent Violence in Relation to Sexism and Belief in the Just World

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## Resumen

**Introducción:** La violencia filio-parental (VFP) es un problema social con graves repercusiones tanto familiares como sociales. La investigación sobre el tema existente hasta el momento se ha centrado principalmente en los padres y en los hijos, ignorando el papel socializador que desempeña el profesorado en el desarrollo de niños y adolescentes. El objetivo del estudio es analizar las explicaciones que dan los docentes de diferentes niveles de enseñanza sobre la VFP y su relación con las actitudes sexistas y la creencia en el mundo justo.

**Método:** Participaron en este estudio 127 docentes de Educación Infantil, Primaria y Secundaria, con edades comprendidas entre los 20 y los 61 años, mujeres en el 77.8% de los casos. Contestaron a un cuestionario en el que se incluyeron las versiones españolas de la Escala de Marlowe y Crowne (1960), de la Escala de Sexismo Ambivalente de Glick y Fiske (1996), y de la Escala de Creencia en el Mundo Justo de Lipkus (1991), así como la Escala de Explicaciones Causales de la VFP de Cortina y Martín (2021).

**Resultados:** Los resultados obtenidos indican que, independientemente de la edad, del nivel de enseñanza y del género, los participantes consideraron la reacción emocional por parte del hijo o hija como la principal causa de la VFP, seguida de una parentalidad inadecuada, una conducta defensiva por parte del hijo o hija, un entorno inadecuado,

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ser un adolescente y, por último, aludiendo a rasgos de maldad o locura en quien ejerce la violencia. De acuerdo con lo esperado, hubo diferencias en las explicaciones preferidas por el profesorado que puntó alto en las dos formas de sexismo y en la creencia en el mundo justo, en relación con las preferidas por el profesorado que puntuó bajo.

**Discusión y conclusiones:** Estos resultados se discuten en el contexto de la cultura de la culpabilización de los padres y del papel del profesorado como enlace entre las familias y los profesionales de la intervención familiar en los casos de VFP.

**Palabras Clave:** Violencia filio-parental, Explicaciones causales, Creencia en un mundo justo, Sexismo ambivalente, Culpabilización de la víctima.

### **Abstract**

**Introduction:** Adolescent-to-Parent Violence (APV) is a social problem with serious family and social repercussions. Research on the subject has so far focused mainly on parents and children, ignoring the socializing role played by teachers in the development of children and adolescents. The aim of the study is to analyze the explanations given by teachers at different levels of education about VFP and its relationship with sexist attitudes and belief in a just world.

**Method:** A total of 127 kindergarden, primary and secondary school teachers, aged between 20 and 61 years, participated in this study. 77.8% were women. They answered a questionnaire that included the Spanish versions of the Marlowe and Crowne Scale (1960), the Glick and Fiske Ambivalent Sexism Scale (1996), and the Lipkus Belief in the Just World Scale (1991), as well as the Causal Explanations Scale of Cortina and Martín (2021).

**Results:** The results indicate that, regardless of age, level of education and gender, the participants considered the emotional reaction of the son or daughter as the main cause of the VFP, followed by inadequate parenting, defensive behavior of the son or daughter, an inadequate environment, being an adolescent and, finally, due to traits of evil or madness of the perpetrator of the violence. As expected, there were differences in the explanations chosen by the teachers who scored higher in the two forms of sexism and in the belief in a just world, with those chosen by the teachers who scored lower.

**Discussion:** Results are discussed in the context of the culture of parental blaming and the role of the teacher as a link between families and family intervention professionals in APV cases.

**Keywords:** Adolescent-to-parent violence, Causal explanations, Belief in a just world, Ambivalent sexism, Victim-blaming.

## INTRODUCTION

Adolescent to parent violence (APV) is a social problem that just has become more visible in Spain than in any other country in the region. This visibility has been reflected in the increase in research and publications on the topic (Contreras et al., 2021). APV is a form of domestic violence that is related to the control exercised by the children on parents' behavior, reversing traditional power relations. It may also have other instrumental objectives, such as obtaining money, desired objects and/or freedom of action, as well as a decrease in competition for certain resources (Pereira & Bertino, 2009). The social concern generated by APV is becoming increasingly greater as a result of the fact that the complaints filed in juvenile courts and the number of young people who are serving judicial measures for this reason is increasing year by year (Memoria de la Fiscalía General del Estado, 2021).

The research conducted so far, rather than testing theoretical models, has focused on analyzing the prevalence of APV and the influence of sociodemographic characteristics, attitudes and personality traits of perpetrators (Del Hoyo et al., 2020; Loinaz & Sousa, 2020; Simmons et al., 2018). In these studies, APV has been addressed mainly from an individual or interpersonal level of analysis, although in many cases it is recognized as a social problem. Research conducted from a psychosocial level of analysis is scarce, but its findings indicate that the behavior of those involved in this type of violence occurs in a cultural context in which the victim is always blamed, and in which APV is considered as the result of a parenting failure in parenting. These social beliefs are internalized by perpetrators, by victims, and by the professionals to whom they turn for help (Holt, 2016; Holt & Retford, 2013).

The internalization of social beliefs about APV is reinforced by the structural violence, understood as a form of secondary violence exercised by the Administration towards families facing this problem (Holt, 2016). This violence is manifested, for example, in the fact that in their sentences most juvenile judges revictimize parents by making them responsible for their children's APV offenses. These sentences also impose measures on parents, such as attending family intervention programs, and their non-compliance could have consequences for their children. This attribution of responsibility to the victims of APV criminalizes them, as it assumes that their behavior is the problem and that they should be the agents of change (Condry & Miles, 2012; Holt, 2009). In cases of adult domestic violence, whether child abuse or intimate partner violence, structural violence can also occur, but, unlike in the case of APV, specific procedures have been adopted to reduce it, such as the creation of specialized courts or the implementation of immediate protective measures for the victim (Quigley, 2007; Radford & Hester, 2006).

The existence of a culture that blames parents, mainly the mother, for everything their children do or do not do, is based on a series of myths and beliefs that are very difficult to eradicate (Caplan & Hall-McCorquodale, 1985ayb). First, adolescence is considered to

be a stage in which young people need to let off steam and rebel against authority, which leads to minimizing the seriousness of APV cases, considering them something exceptional and exclusive to this stage. Secondly, the belief that what is important is the protection of minors can leave violent behavior by adolescents towards their parents unpunished. Thirdly, also the myth that any negative behavior presented by a child or adolescent is due to the parenting practices leads to treating parents as if they were incompetent and lacked personal resources and parenting skills to manage family life, blaming them for their victimization (Del Moral et al., 2015). In the latter myth is linked to the dichotomy between “the good” and “the bad” mother, which has also been internalized by many APV victims (Paterson et al. (2002). This belief leads mothers who are victims of VFP to believe that they would not have experienced violence from their children if they had been good mothers, and children to believe that their mothers are to blame for what happens to them.

As a result of sharing this belief system, mothers end up taking the blame for what happened and, to avoid the shame of being judged by society or even by their own family, they remain silent, deny the severity of the violence they experience, and avoid seeking external support (Brule & Eckstein, 2016; Williams et al., 2016). In many families, this culture of parental blaming leads to APV becoming a taboo topic (Jackson & Mannix 2004; Koniak-Griffin et al., 2006). Mothers' opinions are also often not taken into account in the academic literature (Burck et al., 2019), with few exceptions (e.g., Calvete et al., 2015ayb, 2017; Ibabe, 2019). This fact contributes to the existing perception of APV and to the lack of support battered mothers receive from professionals (Holt & Retford, 2013). Mothers who were victims of APV and participated in the Edenborough et al. (2008) study, for example, showed dissatisfaction with the services received from some professionals. Specifically, they reported that family physicians, teachers and school counselors, to whom they turned for help, minimized the importance of their experience. Likewise, the responses they received from police officers implied that they were exaggerating what had happened and that the violence they had suffered was their problem and not that of their children.

Taking into account the evidence described so far, it is inevitable to conceptually relate the perception of APV and the Belief in a just world (Lerner, 1965; Lerner & Simmons, 1966). This construct was postulated to explain how, when faced with situations that are unfair or threatening, people need to maintain a sense of control by believing that they will get everything they deserve in life. If people did not believe that what happens to them is a consequence of their actions, they would feel that they will continually be exposed to unpleasant situations beyond its control. Thus, to avoid the discomfort generated by these threats, they blame the victims of injustices by holding them responsible for their suffering (Lerner, 1980; Lerner & Clayton, 2011). Belief in the just world is present in different cultures and is related to sociopolitical factors (Furnham, 2003). In societies with more pronounced imbalances, those with more resources and power believe that the world in

which they live is just, while those with less wealth and access to social resources consider it to be unjust (Hofstede, 1984). This belief allows people belonging to more favored sectors to condemn and devalue the poor in order to neutralize their feelings of guilt and justify social injustices (Barreiro, 2008, 2009; Barreiro & Castorina, 2005).

The tendency to make victims responsible for their suffering has also been linked to sexism (Downey, 1997) in the context of gender-based violence (Gracia, 2014; Waltermaurer, 2012), and in the context of child to parent violence (Holt, 2016). Research on gender-based violence is full of evidence on how sexist attitudes lead to victim blaming (Cottrell & Monk, 2004; Gracia, 2014; Waltermaurer, 2012). These attitudes are based on myths, which serve to absolve or justify the aggressor, among which are: believing that the crime is not serious, that it is an accident or that if the victims were not so ignorant or incompetent nothing would have happened to them (Valor-Segura et al., 2011).

The relationship between APV and gender-based violence has been highlighted in the literature very early on. Harbin and Madden (1983), for example, in studying couples with adolescent children, found that mothers were the primary targets of violent behavior. Subsequent research has repeatedly ratified this (Downey, 1997; Lyons et al., 2015; Robinson et al., 2004; Ulman & Straus, 2003), except in rare instances (Peek et al., 1985). The acceptance of this relationship has been so emphasized that it has been proposed to replace the term APV with the term adolescent to mother abuse, in an attempt to more accurately reflect the complexity of the pattern of aggressor-victim violence from a gender perspective (Downey, 1997; Holt, 2011; Wilcox, 2012). APV reverses traditional power roles in the family and turns the adolescent into a control figure confronting the parents. When this occurs, the child acquires unusual power within the family and the parents do not know how to reestablish the original structure (Calvete et al., 2014). Holt (2016) considers that, when the pattern of abuse and the gendered relational dynamics in which power is unequally distributed between men and women within the household are taken into account, APV becomes part of a broader pattern of violence against women.

Alongside feminist reflections, the consideration of APV as a form of gender-based violence has also been supported by a series of events in the United Kingdom. First, the inclusion of VFP in the Government Action Plan addressing violence against women and girls (Her Majesty's Government, 2014). Second, the emergence of specialized APV intervention programs developed by domestic violence services for professional practice, e.g., the Yuva Project in London (McGeeney et al., 2015). Third, the inclusion of APV in information campaigns targeting government agencies that provide services to women, in general, and victims of domestic violence, in particular (Paul, 2014).

When considering gender in terms of a social structural dimension, rather than sex in biological terms, attention should be paid to the sexist attitudes that sustain the unequal distribution of power between men and women. Some authors, such as Cottrell and Monk

(2004), have linked these sexist attitudes to APV through differential socialization linked to gender. These authors consider that the differential socialization of boys and girls makes them to internalize gender roles and stereotypes that enhance power and control over women in interpersonal relationships. By attacking their mothers, boys show the internalization of the model of sexist masculinity transmitted by their fathers, while girls would use violence to distance themselves from the image of feminine weakness represented by the mother. The link between APV and sexist attitudes is taken for granted in these studies, but the empirical evidence in this regard is scarce. Among the exceptions is the work of Cortina and Martín (2020), in which it was found that high scores in hostile sexism increased the probability of stealing from parents (financial violence) and spitting at them (psychological violence), while benevolent sexism decreased the probability of the latter behavior.

The victimization of the APV victim may be related, besides to belief in the just world and sexist attitudes, to the explanations that people spontaneously give to the APV. In Cortina and Martín's (2021) study, it was shown that people choose among six types of explanations when making sense of APV: Defense, Inadequate Parenting, Inadequate Environment, Emotional Reaction, Evil/Madness, and Adolescence. The first explanation is related to the hypothesis of the bidirectionality of violence that considers that adolescents who assault their parents have previously been victims or witnesses of violence at home (Gallego et al., 2019; Ibabe & Bentler, 2016). The Inadequate Parenting explanation is the one that most reflects the cultural context of parental blaming, as it explains APV as the result of inadequate and excessively permissive parenting skills. The third explanation refers to Inadequate Environment and is in line with research on risk factors for APV, or violence in general, such as having antisocial friendships (Loinaz & Sousa, 2020), consuming drugs (Del Hoyo-Bilbao et al., 2020; Calvete et al., 2020) and living in a violent environment (Fariña et al., 2008). The fourth explanation, Emotional Reaction, is consistent with research pointing to adolescents' lack of emotional regulation and anger management as risk factors for APV (Contreras & Cano, 2016). The fifth explanation, Evil/Madness suggests that those who perpetrate APV have traits of malice, sadism, and mental health problems. This type of explanation serves the function of making sense of serious and violent crimes often incomprehensible to the population (Vasiljevic & Viki, 2013), dehumanizing the aggressors and considering them lacking emotionality and reasoning ability (Bandura, 1990). Finally, the Adolescence explanation alludes to the fact that APV is the result of a transitional stage of normal development characterized by rebellion against authority and norms, in an attempt to define his/her personal and sexual identity as an adult.

### ***Objectives and hypotheses***

Taking the research described above as a starting point, the aim of this paper is to analyze the relationship of belief in a just world, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism with

the explanations of APV, in a sample of teachers from different levels of education. The interest in this type of participants resides in the fact that research on VFP has focused almost exclusively on the intrafamilial sphere, ignoring the importance in childhood and adolescence of the school and the teacher, as a context and socializing agent, respectively. It is expected that teachers who believe more strongly in a just world and who have more sexist attitudes will prefer victim-blaming statements when explaining VFP. Specifically, it is expected that there will be statistically significant differences between those who score high and low on these variables, in relation to the factors Defense and Inadequate Parenting, as defined by Cortina and Martín (2021).

## METHOD

### *Participants*

The sample included a total of 127 teachers, aged between 20 and 61 years ( $M = 32.74$ ;  $SD = 12.22$ ). The participants were graduates in Education from three levels: 25.20% in Early Childhood Education, 40.95% in Primary Education and 27.56% in Secondary Education. The 77.8% were women.

### *Measure instruments*

The participants answered a questionnaire that included four scales, as well as several items on sociodemographic variables such as gender, age and level of education to which they belonged.

First, the Spanish version (Ferrando & Chico, 2000) of the Marlowe-Crowne Social Desirability Scale was used to measure social desirability. It is composed of 33 items with a *True* or *False* response format. The internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) was .79.

Secondly, Belief in a just world was measured with the Spanish adaptation of Barreiro et al. (2014) of the Lipkus (1991) Belief in a Just World Scale. This instrument is composed of 7 items to be answered on a Likert-type scale from 0 (*totally-disagree*) to 10 points (*totally agree*). The internal consistency Cronbach's Alpha) was .86.

Thirdly, the Escala de Explicaciones de la Violencia Filioparental [Explanations of Adolescent-to-Parent Violence Scale] (EEVFP; Cortina & Martín, 2021) was administered to participants. This scale is composed of 28 items and six factors: Inadequate Parentality, Defense, Inadequate Environment, Emotional Reaction, Adolescence, and Evil/Madness. Participants were asked to indicate their degree of agreement or disagreement with each of the items on a Likert-type response scale from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 10 points (*strongly agree*). The internal consistency for the scale factors was good ( $\alpha = .82, .83, .81, .79, .81$  and  $.81$ , respectively).

Finally, to measure sexist attitudes, the Spanish version of the Ambivalent Sexism Scale (Expósito et al., 1998), was included. The scale is composed of 12 items and two subscales:

Hostile sexism and Benevolent sexism. Participants answered each item on a Likert-type scale from 0 (*totally disagree*) to 10 points (*totally agree*). The internal consistency (Cronbach's Alpha) for Hostile Sexism was .87, and for Benevolent Sexism .83.

### ***Procedure***

The questionnaire was developed through the Qualtrics<sup>XM</sup> survey platform, and was distributed through social networks and e-mails. Incident or convenience sampling was followed using the snowball technique, starting with university students and professors. The participants accessed the questionnaire through a link provided in the message with which they were contacted. In the instructions, they were informed that research was being conducted in the [Universidad de La Laguna], on the beliefs that people have about sons and daughter's violence toward their mothers and/or fathers. They were assured of the voluntary nature of their participation, as well as the anonymity and confidentiality of their answers. After reading the instructions and before answering the questionnaire, they accepted an informed consent form, authorizing the use of the information provided for research purposes.

### ***Data analyses***

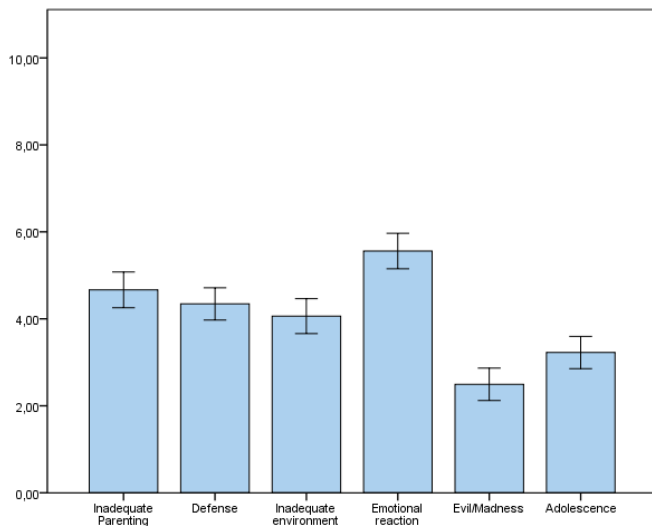
The data were analyzed using the SPSS IBM Statistics 22.0 package. First, it was calculated the internal consistency of the scales used, the scores of the variables under study averaging the items of each scale, and the scale descriptive statistics. Correlation, using Pearson's  $r$  were calculated between Social Desirability and Age with the six factors of the EEVFP, and between Belief in the just world, Hostile sexism and Benevolent sexism. Secondly, three MANOVAs were performed in which the dependent variables were the six factors of the EEVFP, with the grouping factor Hostile Sexism, Benevolent Sexism and Belief in the just world. Pillai's Trace was used instead of Wilks's Lambda, because it is more robust, when statistical assumptions underlying the lineal model were not fully met. Nevertheless, as for univariate  $F$ -tests, when variability is greater in the smaller group,  $F$  is liberal and vice versa. To test the correct rejection of the null hypothesis, two safeguards were verified (Mayorga et al., 2020): a) that the theoretical  $F$  (Box's conservative test, 4.023) was less than the empirical value of  $F$ ; and b) that the lower limit for the effect size was higher than a trivial effect ( $\eta^2$  95% LL CI > .0025). In all results with significant univariate  $F$ -tests ( $p < .05$ ), these requirements were met.



## RESULTS

The means of the EEVFP factors, shown in Figure 1, indicate that the explication preferred by teachers in general terms was Emotional Reaction ( $M = 5.58, SD = 2.19$ ), followed by Inadequate Parenting ( $M = 4.66, SD = 2.21$ ), Advocacy ( $M = 4.30, SD = 2.04$ ), Inadequate Environment ( $M = 4.10, SD = 2.19$ ), Adolescence ( $M = 3.22, SD = 2.00$ ), and finally Evil/Madness ( $M = 2.45, SD = 2.03$ ).

**Figure 1.**  
*Means and Estándar Deviations of Teachers' Scores in the Factor of the EEVFP*



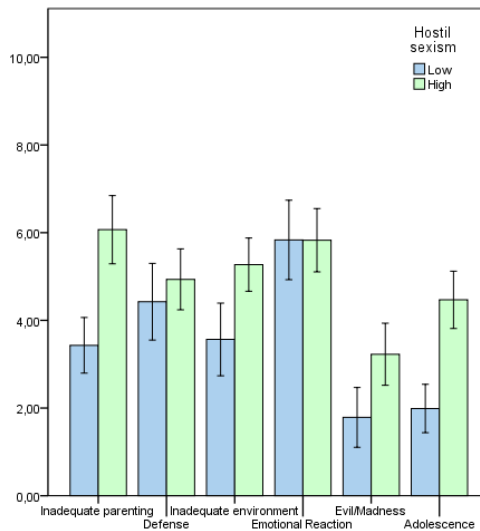
Belief in the just world correlated significantly with Hostile sexism,  $r(126) = .31, p < .001$ , sharing 9.6% of the variance, and with Benevolent sexism,  $r(126) = .27, p < .01$ . The correlation between both forms of sexism was also significant,  $r(126) = .37, p < .001$ , sharing 13.7% of the variance. None of the EEVFP factors correlated significantly with Social Desirability (Inadequate Parenting,  $r(113) = .05, n.s.$ , Defense,  $r(113) = -.14, n.s.$ , Inadequate Environment,  $r(113) = -.04, n.s.$ , Emotional Reaction,  $r(114) = -.18, n.s.$ ; Evil/Madness:  $r(113) = .04, n.s.$ , and Adolescence:  $r(114) = -.12, n.s.$ ). Age only correlated significantly with the Evil/Madness factor,  $r(118) = .36, p < .001$  (Inadequate Parenting,  $r(117) = .17, n.s.$ , Defense,  $r(117) = -.15, n.s.$ , Inadequate Environment,  $r(117) = -.11, n.s.$ , Emotional Reaction,  $r(118) = -.09, n.s.$ , and Adolescence,  $r(118) = .09, n.s.$ ). Therefore, neither Social desirability nor Age were included in subsequent analyses as covariates.

In order to explore the effects of Hostile sexism on the EEVFP dimensions by a MANOVA, Hostile sexism was categorized (grouping factor) in low Hostile sexism (participants with

scores below the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile) and high Hostile sexism (participants with scores above the 75<sup>th</sup> percentile). The results exhibited a statistically significant multivariate effect, Pillai's Trace = .50,  $F(6, 52) = 8.78$ ,  $p < .001$ ;  $\eta^2 = .50$ , as well as statistically significant univariate effects in Inadequate Parenting,  $F(1, 57) = 27.52$ ;  $p < .001$ ;  $\eta^2 = .33$ , Inadequate Environment,  $F(1, 57) = 12.05$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .17$ , Evil/Madness,  $F(1, 57) = 8.79$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .13$ , and Adolescence,  $F(1, 57) = 33.64$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .37$ . As reflected in Figure 2, people with high scores on Hostile sexism, unlike those with low scores, most considered that APV is the result of inadequate parenting, being raised in an inadequate environment, the son's or daughter's evil/madness, and being in adolescence.

**Figure 2.**

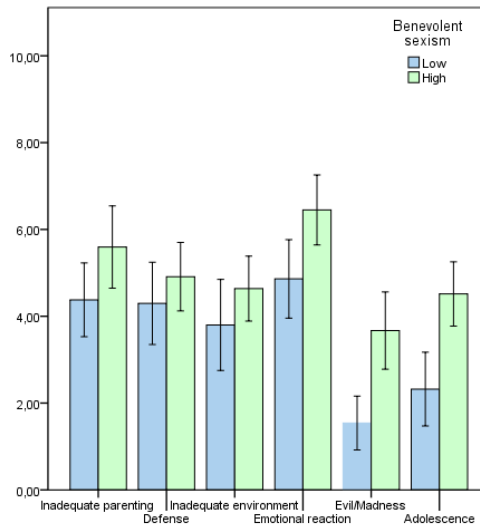
*Means and Estándar Deviations for EEVFP Factors of Teachers scoring high and low in Hostil sexism*



Next, the relationship between Benevolent sexism and the EEVFP factors was analyzed by means of a MANOVA, dichotomizing the Benevolent sexism variable in the same way as was previously done with Hostile sexism. Benevolent sexism dichotomized was taken as the grouping variable, and the six factors of the EEVFP as dependent variables. The results revealed a statistically significant multivariate effect, Pillai's trace = .35,  $F(6, 48) = 4.27$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .35$ , and statistically significant univariate effects in Emotional Reaction,  $F(1, 53) = 7.27$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .12$ , Evil/Madness,  $F(1, 53) = 16.08$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .23$ , and Adolescence,  $F(1, 53) = 16.05$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .23$ . Thus, as reflected in Figure 3, those who scored high on Benevolent sexism, unlike those with low scores, most considered the APV

more to be the result of an emotional reaction, the son or daughter's evil/madness, and being in the adolescent stage.

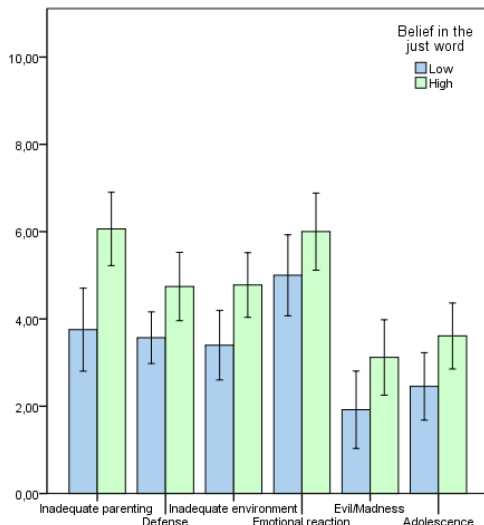
**Figure 3.**  
*Means and Estándar Deviations for EEVFP Factors of Teachers scoring high and low in Benevolent sexism*



Finally, a MANOVA was conducted with the six factors of the EEVFP as dependent variables and Belief in the just world dichotomized as the independent variable. The process for dichotomizing Belief in the just world was the same as that followed for dichotomizing Hostile sexism and Benevolent sexism. A multivariate, Pillai's Trace = .27,  $F(6, 48) = 2.93$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .27$ , and statistically significant univariate effects in Inadequate Parenting,  $F(1, 53) = 14.06$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $\eta^2 = .21$ , Defense,  $F(1, 53) = 5.79$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .10$ , Inadequate Environment,  $F(1, 53) = 6.82$ ,  $p = .012$ ,  $\eta^2 = .11$ , and Adolescence,  $F(1, 53) = 4.81$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .08$  factors were found for Belief in the just world. As reflected in Figure 4, those who scored high on Belief in the just world, unlike those with low scores, most APV as a result of inadequate parenting, the son's or daughter's attempt to defend himself or herself, an inappropriate environment, and the adolescent stage.

**Figure 4.**

*Means and Estándar Deviations for EEFVP Factors of Teachers scoring high and low in Belief in the Just World*



## DISCUSSION Y CONCLUSIONS

The results of this study allow to describe the APV explanations given by teachers at different levels of education and their relationship with belief in the just world, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism. The results obtained indicate, first of all, that the APV explanation preferred by the teachers who participated in this study, regardless of their gender, the level of education at which they taught and their age, was Emotional Reaction, followed by Inadequate Parenting, Defense, Inadequate Environment, Adolescence and, lastly, Evil/Madness. Only in the case of this last factor was it found that older people had a greater tendency to assume that those who assaulted their parents were crazy or had evil or sadistic traits.

The teachers' predilection for explanations such as Emotional Reaction to frustration coincide with the conclusions reached by research that identifies lack of emotional regulation, anger management and low self-control as predictors of APV. These deficits are considered to be the result of that aggressors, as adolescents, are in a maturation process that has not yet been completed (Contreras & Cano, 2016; Fernández-González et al., 2021). This explanation is also consistent with what has come to be called the "new" (as opposed

to the “traditional”) delinquent profile of APV (Carrasco et al., 2018), echoed by the State Attorney General's Office in its Circular 1/2010 (Fiscalía General del Estado, 2010), insofar as it refers to minors who manifest defiant behaviors of disobedience, and their violent behavior is considered the result of the use of inconsistent educational guidelines and the lack of limits by parents, who try to avoid any type of frustration to their children (Pereira & Bertino, 2009).

The explanation chosen in second place in this study also refers to this “new” profile, insofar as it refers to Inadequate Parenting. Although this seems to be the explanation preferred by the media (Pereira, 2006), by the administration of justice (Fiscalía General del Estado, 2010), and by many professionals working in family intervention, the results on the relationship between parenting styles and APV are contradictory. The available evidence indicates that APV is related in some cases to the permissive parenting style (Calvete et al., 2014), in others to the authoritarian (Seijo et al., 2020; Ibabe & Bentler, 2016), and in others no relationship is found (Calvete et al., 2015). It is possible that this inconsistency derives from the fact that there is a lack of longitudinal studies on the subject (Calvete et al., 2020) and parents are usually assessed when they report, at the moment when conflict is at its highest level, so it has not been possible to verify whether the parental style was the one that parents used at the beginning or whether it was a style that was used as a reaction to the violence. Future research on APV would benefit from longitudinal studies that could analyze which parental educational styles predict children's violence toward them over time.

The inadequate environment in which adolescents who engage in APV grow up is another factor that is referred to as an explanation for their violence against parents. This belief is in line with research that highlights the positive relationship between living in a violent environment (Fariña et al., 2008), using drugs (DelHoyo-Bilbao et al., 2020), having antisocial friendships (Loinaz & Sousa, 2020), and APV. This explanation relates more to the “traditional” profile, in which the VFP is part of a larger problem, such as severe psychopathology, drug use, or a pattern of response to previous neglect or violence (Carrasco et al., 2018). Also consistent with this profile is the explanation Defense, chosen in third place by the teachers, which is consistent with research on the impact of prior exposure to violence and with the hypothesis of the bidirectionality of violence (Gallego et al., 2019; Ibabe & Bentler, 2016).

The explanations that refer to APV as a consequence of Adolescence, chosen in fourth place by the teachers, are supported by works in which this developmental stage is characterized as the moment in which the person reveals against authority and norms, in an attempt to define one's own identity (Oliva et al., 2010). This explanation is in line with the evidence that places the peak of violence in general (Moffitt, 1993), and of VFP in particular (Ibabe & Bentler, 2016), in late adolescence. The explanation chosen last by the teachers is the Evil/Madness. At the scientific level, research conducted so far has found a

relationship between APV and emotional insensitivity (Cortina & Martín, 2020), and lack of empathy (Ibabe et al., 2009), but such relationship is weak, compared to that existing with other variables. As for psychopathy, the postulated relationship with APV (Garrido, 2005) has not received empirical support so far.

These results are mostly similar to those obtained by Cortina and Martin (2021) with a sample of the general population. The differences are marginal, in the sense that the teachers' means are lower for all the factors and relegate to last place the explanation of Evil/insanity, as opposed to Adolescence. The use of this explanation implies dehumanizing the aggressors by considering them as madmen with evil or sadistic traits, lacking emotionality and reasoning capacity. That teachers associate these characteristics with adolescent aggressors less frequently than the general population might be due to the amount of time they spend interacting with minors in their workday, which could lead them to empathize more with them, rather than dehumanize them. But it is also possible that this difference is artifactual, due to the fact that in Cortina and Martin's (2021) study the sample is six times larger and more heterogeneous. Data from a larger sample of teachers should be available before reaching definitive conclusions in this regard.

The results on the relationship of APV explanations with belief in the just world, hostile sexism and benevolent sexism show, first, that teachers who scored high on hostile sexism -and who therefore expressed more negative attitudes toward women- explained the APV as the result of adolescence, inadequate parenting, inadequate environment, and the adolescent's madness or evil, more than those with low scores. Comparing the means of those who scored high on hostile sexism with those who scored high on benevolent sexism -and who therefore consider that women are fragile and should be protected- it was found that the latter also explain APV as the result of adolescence and the aggressor's madness or evil, but differ in considering it also as the result of an emotional reaction. These results are consistent with previous research linking APV to sexist attitudes (Downey, 1997). By attributing APV to inadequate parenting and environment, sexist individuals are blaming the mother. The mechanism that leads to considering that she has become victim of her child because she has not been a "good mother", seems to be similar to the one that leads to considering that if a woman has been abused by her husband, it is because she has not been a good wife.

The findings about belief in the just world are along the same lines. Attributing responsibility to the victims of APV allows for the reestablishment of the order of the universe that has been broken by the violence, assuming that the victim's behavior is the problem and that she must be the agent of change (Condry & Miles, 2012; Holt, 2009). In cases of APV, blaming the victim implies considering her incompetent and lacking of personal resources and parenting skills to manage family life (Del Moral et al., 2015), as

well as believes that if she had been a “good mother” nothing would have happened to her (Paterson et al., 2002).

The results obtained in this study, although promising, should be viewed with caution before reaching definitive conclusions. One of the main limitations to be acknowledged is that the data come from a sample in which the proportion of women is much higher than that of men. This asymmetry mirrors that in the field of education, where there are usually far more female teachers than male teachers. However, it is not trivial because it would be expected that the impact of sexism in more balanced samples would be greater. Also, replicating the study with a larger sample would also make it possible to assess the effect of gender and level of education simultaneously, as well as of belief in the just world and sexism, since enough participants would be available for each cell when crossing the variables. A larger sample could be overcome quite easily, but getting a balanced sample in the case of teachers is more complex, unless male participation is encouraged and female participation restricted.

These limitations notwithstanding, this work contributes to a change of perspective in the study of APV by using a psychosocial level of analysis, approaching this type of violence as the social problem that it is. It also highlights that it is important to pay attention not only to parents and their children, but also to the professionals who accompany them in the socialization process, especially when developmental problems arise. Among these professionals, teachers stand out, since they closely follow the development of children and adolescents from kindergarten to high school, becoming the second element in their socialization and a fundamental support for parents. After the home, school and high school are the environment in which children and adolescents spend the most time. Therefore, future research should delve deeper into the role that teachers could play in the prevention and control of APV, as well as in providing support and information to victims who might approach them for understanding and advice. Thus, they could become a valuable link between families and family intervention professionals in APV cases. Future research on APV would benefit greatly from including them as an object of study and raising questions related to their role in this type of violence which, although intrafamilial, goes beyond the boundaries of the home.

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