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## On- and Offline Psychological Violence in Young Dyads: Frequency, Directionality, and Justifications

Violencia psicológica on- y offline en jóvenes diadas: Frecuencia, direccionalidad y justificaciones

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**Abstract.**

The main objective is to analyze the directionality and frequency of different offline and online psychological violence in young heterosexual couples, and to examine the degree of agreement of the partners in their perception and motives of their use of violence. 230 young couples completed the study. The average age was 19.27 for women ( $SD = 1.73$ ; range 15–24) and 20.51 for men ( $SD = 2.83$ ; range 16–28). The results showed a high prevalence of violence with the exception of direct online aggression. Frequency was low, and agreement was generally acceptable. There were significant differences between the violence reported by each member. Both partners reported a low self-perception of victims or aggressors, and a low perception of their abusive online behaviors as a form of violence. The main justifications were the same for members. These results could help explain the relationship between adherence to romantic love myths and psychological violence.

**Resumen.**

El principal objetivo es analizar la direccionalidad y frecuencia de distintos tipos de violencia psicológica online y offline en parejas heterosexuales jóvenes, así como examinar el grado de acuerdo en su percepción y los motivos para el uso de violencia. Participaron 230 parejas jóvenes. La edad media era 19.27 en mujeres ( $DE = 1.73$ ; rango 15–24) y 20.51 en hombres ( $DE = 2.83$ ; rango 16–28). Los resultados mostraron una elevada prevalencia de violencia, a excepción de la agresión directa online. La frecuencia fue baja, y el acuerdo fue generalmente aceptable. Se observaron diferencias significativas entre la violencia declarada por cada miembro. Ambos informaron de baja autopercepción como víctimas o agresores, y baja percepción de sus comportamientos abusivos online como forma de violencia. Las principales justificaciones fueron similares para ambos. Estos resultados podrían ayudar a explicar la relación entre la adhesión a los mitos del amor romántico y la violencia psicológica.

**Keywords.**

Directionality, Justifications, Perception, Young Couples, Online and Offline Violence.

**Palabras Clave.**

Direccionalidad, justificaciones, percepción, parejas Jóvenes, Violencia Online y Offline.

## 1. Introduction

Violent romantic relationships begin at an early age (López-Cepero et al., 2015; Zamora-Damián et al., 2018) and implies any type of intentional aggression by one partner against the other during adolescent or young adults' courtship (Rubio-Garay et al., 2017). Studies have found that premarital violence increases the likelihood of recurrence throughout the marriage; thus, acknowledging and understanding this phenomenon in intimate relationships can help in planning and promoting its prevention (Alegria & Rodríguez, 2017; Peña et al., 2013). Therefore, the study of violence in dating relationships is of particular relevance.

Albeit there are different types of violence, psychological abuse tends to be the most prevalent among young people (Alcalá et al., 2021). In the review conducted by Rubio-Garay et al. (2017), the range of variation in psychological violence committed was between 4.3% and 95.3% in men and 4.2% and 97% in women. In psychological violence suffered, the data varied between 8.5% and 94.5% in men and 9.3% and 95.5% in women. These slight differences in the results can be explained mainly by the different sampling contexts and the evaluation method used (López-Cepero et al., 2015; Pérez et al., 2020; Póo & Vizcaya, 2008). Furthermore, there is a new form of psychological violence, called cyberviolence in relationships, which refers to violent behaviors towards the partner or ex-partner through the use of new information and communication technologies, such as the Internet, cell phones, and social networks (Guadix et al., 2018). As with offline psychological violence, its prevalence depends on the type of violence analyzed, the sample, and the methodology and measurement instruments used (De Los Reyes et al., 2022). A strong association between online abuse and offline abuse is suggested in several studies (Cava et al., 2020; Cava et al., 2020; González-Ortega et al., 2020; Rodríguez-Domínguez et al., 2018). Almost all adolescents who suffered cyber abuse had also experienced offline psychological abuse (Cava et al., 2020; Martínez et al., 2024).

There are currently two main approaches that analyze the dynamics of violence: on the one hand, there is a patriarchal and unidirectional perspective (Anderson, 2013), which considers men as the sole perpetrators of violence, and on the other hand, a bidirectional violence (BV) approach, consisting of the co-occurrence of violence by both partners (Holmes et al., 2019), and thus suggesting that men and women can assume the roles of both victims and aggressors (Rojas-Solís & Romero-Méndez, 2022).

The unidirectional perspective has marked the line of couple research for a long time. Consequently, it focused on men's perpetration and neglected the victimization of men and boys, as well as women's violence toward their male partners (Langhinrichsen-Rohling, et

al., 2012; Machado et al., 2024). However, due to social evolution, several typologies of violence have emerged, based on the BV perspective (Bates, 2016). In this sense, systematic reviews found that BV is the most prevalent typology in intimate relationships (Vasconcelos et al., 2023; Machado et al., 2024). It is therefore considered necessary to develop research that takes into account the dual nature of violence between young couples (López-Barranco, et al., 2022).

Research in young relations has shown that violence is exercised and received by both boys and girls (Ramírez-Carrasco et al., 2023; Rubio-Garay, et al., 2017), especially in offline and online psychological violence, reaching a prevalence of 79% (Garrido-Antón, et al., 2020; Graña & Cuenca, 2014). However, it has been difficult to examine BV, mainly because clear and consistent terminology does not exist to refer to this phenomenon (Machado et al., 2024). This fact opens a wide debate, and several frameworks for understanding the occurrence of violence in intimate relationships have been put forth, examining various factors across individual, interpersonal, and socio-cultural levels (Cinquegrana et al., 2023). Prior research has demonstrated that beliefs about the acceptability of intimate partner violence are associated with the perpetration among adolescents (Shorey et al., 2019). The role of self-defense in bidirectional violence has also been postulated (Muñoz & Echeburúa, 2016), despite the fact that self-defense strategies would only explain a limited percentage of this type of aggression (Rodríguez-Pérez, 2015). Finally, other possible explanations have been proposed, such as revenge, jealousy, control, domination, and the deterioration of the relationship itself (Fernández-Fuertes & Fuertes, 2010). It is very difficult to discern the possible causes of BV because of all the factors involved in it. In addition, BV has been described in different studies with terms such as mutual violence, symmetrical violence, victim-offender overlap, and situational violence, among others, which might impact the knowledge of the phenomena (Lopez-Barranco et al., 2022; Machado et al., 2024). In spite of the controversy that exists regarding the directionality of violence in young couples, in most of the studies on intimate partner violence, participants report their behavior and the behavior of their partners or ex-partners. It suggests that the causes could be in dyadic areas (Bates, 2016). However, there is a dearth of studies in which the unit of analysis is the dyad (Aguilera-Jiménez et al., 2021; Graña & Cuenca; 2014; Herrero et al., 2020; Riesgo et al., 2019).

On the other hand, despite the high prevalence rates, this violence is difficult to recognize, and these behaviors can be normalized and interpreted as natural (Alcalá et al., 2021). Paino-Quesada et al., (2020) found that only 8.4% of the sample recognized that they were abused in the relationship. In this sense, the romantic myth of love could be of great relevance. These

myths refer to the set of unreal and distorted beliefs about the supposed nature of love (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2020). Many young couples and adolescents are unable to recognize violent behaviors and are more vulnerable to the influence of myths of romantic love, making them justify and accept that certain abusive, controlling, and jealous behaviors are expressions of love or concern in their romantic relationship (Cava et al., 2020; Martínez et al., 2024; Ramírez-Carrasco et al., 2023). In fact, studies that have analyzed the motives and justifications for the presence of violence in the relationship have found that it is a concern masked by jealousy and mistrust (Rodríguez-Castro et al., 2018; Borrajo et al., 2015). The study conducted by Alegría & Rodríguez (2017) found that the main reasons given were jealousy and insecurity on the part of one or both partners, lack of communication, and the naturalization and invisibilization of violence. The gaming justification has been highlighted as one of the reasons cited for the presence of violence (Rodríguez-Pérez, 2015; Rojas-Solís & Romero-Méndez, 2023). The analysis of the motives for violence in young couples would allow a better understanding of the context in which this type of aggression occurs and, therefore, would facilitate the development of violence prevention programs (Borrajo & Gámez-Guadix, 2015).

Considering this background, the main objective of this study is to analyze the directionality and frequency of different offline and online psychological violence in young heterosexual couples, and to examine the degree of agreement between the partners, and their perception. Finally, we explore the motives given for the violent behaviors performed.

The following hypotheses are expected to be confirmed:

*H*<sub>1</sub>: The majority of couples may use offline and online psychological violence.

*H*<sub>2</sub>: The use of violence in couples will not be very frequent.

*H*<sub>3</sub>: They may not even perceive themselves as victims or aggressors.

*H*<sub>4</sub>: Both members will differ in their perception of violence and thus, agreement will be low.

*H*<sub>5</sub>: Young people may not perceive online violence as real violence.

*H*<sub>6</sub>: They will concur in the motives given to justify violence in their couple relationship.

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Participants and Procedure

Two hundred forty-six heterosexual couples participated in this study. Sixteen couples were eliminated due to incomplete questionnaire or did not meet the requirements by one of the members of the dyad (230; total *n* = 430). The final inclusion criteria for recruitment

were that one of the partners had to be a student between 15 and 22 years old, they were involved in a heterosexual relationship for at least one month, and both members of the couple participated in the study. The average age was 19.27 for women (*SD* = 1.73; range 15–24) and 20.51 for men (*SD* = 2.83; range 16–28). The academic level of the participants was as follows: secondary education (6.30%), graduate studies (21.74%), university studies (71.96%). The average relationship time was 24.24 months (*SD* = 20.57).

For sample collection, several schools and universities were contacted and asked to collaborate. Through them, adolescents and young people were invited to participate in the study. The students agreed to participate in the study voluntarily and to sincerely respond without commenting with their partners. The questionnaire for one member of the couple was associated with his/her partner using a common code. Once they volunteered, students under 18 years of age were first handed a consent form signed by their legal guardians, after which they completed an online questionnaire. Informed consent was included in the questionnaire for students over 18 years of age. The protocol was approved by the Ethics Committee of the authors' university (Ref. NOV.17/6.TES).

### 2.2 Instruments

#### 2.2.1 Sociodemographic Variables

Information about sex, age, academic level, as well as information concerning couple relationships were included, such as the time of the relationship.

#### 2.2.2 Jealousy and Control Offline

Dominating and Jealous Tactics Scale (DJTS; Kasian & Painter, 1992) adapted to young Spanish by Muñoz-Rivas et al. (2019) was used to evaluate jealousy and control behaviors offline. The scale is composed of 11 items for perpetration and the same items for victimization, which are divided into two subscales: Dominant Tactics, which includes seven items (e.g., "I have threatened my partner that I will go with someone else"), and Jealous Tactics, made up of 4 items (e.g., "I have been jealous of other boys/girls"). The DJTS is rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very frequently*). The reliability for the total scale was  $\alpha = .81$  for perpetration (CFI = .94; RSMEA = .08) and  $\alpha = .83$  for victimization (CFI = .94; RSMEA = .08).

#### 2.2.3 Verbal Aggression Offline

Conflict in Adolescent Dating Relationships Inventory (CADRI; Fernández-Fuertes et al., 2006) was used to measure verbal aggression offline, and thus, only the subscale of verbal aggression was used. It is made up of 10 items for perpetration and ten items for victimization using a range of response from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*frequently*) (e.g., "I threatened him/her to leave the relationship"). The Cronbach alpha was .80 for perpetra-

tion (CFI=.90; RSMEA=.08) and .83 for victimization (CFI=.91; RSMEA=.08).

#### 2.2.4 Cyber Dating Abuse

Cyber dating abuse questionnaire (CDAQ; Borrajo et al., 2015) is composed of 20 items for perpetration and 20 items for victimization (total 40 items). Additionally, each component is divided into two factors: Direct aggression (eleven items each; e.g.; "I threatened my partner using new technologies to physically hurt him/her"); and Control (nine items each; e.g.; "Using mobile applications, I controlled the hour of the last connection with my partner or my former partner). The reliability for this sample was  $\alpha = .88$  for perpetration and  $\alpha = .90$  for the victimization of direct aggression (CFI = .99; RSMEA = .02); and  $\alpha = .91$  for perpetration and  $\alpha = .93$  for the victimization of control (CFI = 1.00; RSMEA = .00). The response Likert scale used ranged from 1 point (*never*) to 6 points (*more than 20 times*).

#### 2.2.5 Perception of Violence

Participants were asked four ad hoc questions. First, they were asked if they perceive themselves as a victim of abuse or mistreatment in their current relationship, and if they perceive themselves as a person who abuses or mistreats in their current relationship. The other two questions referred to their perception of online violence: "Do you think that, in general, the behaviors described in the previous scale (CDAQ) about cell phones and social networks can be considered as psychological violence towards the partner?" and "Do you think that the behaviors you have reported (CDAQ) performed by you or your partner through cell phones and social networks can be considered as psychological violence towards the partner?". These questions had only two possible answers: yes/no. Affirmative answers were remarked as positive.

#### 2.2.6 Motives for Aggressive Behavior

To have a comprehensive measure of the reasons that each member of the couple gives to justify responding aggressively to or receiving an aggressive response from their partners, we included two questions: "For what reasons do you perform these behaviors?" "For what reasons do you think your partner performs these behaviors?" To respond they were given a list of eight options derived from the literature: a) Jealousy, indicating that the person feels fear/threat of abandonment by his or her partner by another person b) Control, as he/she wants to know what their partner does, with whom, where, etc. . . c) Concern, when the person is concerned that something bad has happened or may happen to his or her partner d) Bi-directional, or behaving this way as their partner also exerts these behaviors on him/her; e) In response, indicates that the behaviors are performed in response to that same behavior previously made by their partner f) Glambing/Joke, they behave this way as a "normal" way of teasing their partner; g) Person-

ality, the person attributes behaviors to the traits and qualities that make up his or her or his or her partner's way of being; h) Absence, for individual asserting these behaviors do not occur in their relationship. They could choose more than one option.

### 2.3 Data Analysis

Data were processed using the IBM SPSS Statistics 25.0 statistical package. The prevalence and level of agreement on the occurrence of violence were analyzed, considering violence as the occurrence of any violent behavior regardless of its frequency. The response required dichotomization of the scores (0 = no occurrence of violence; 1 = occurrence of violence). The starting point was the "0 tolerance" principle, where the direct score of violent behaviors was coded as 0 when the direct score of the behaviors was 1, and 1 when the direct score of the behaviors was higher than 1. Agreement on occurrence was calculated using Cohen's Kappa index (1960), which analyzes the relationship between two categorical variables; Kappa coefficients were interpreted according to the following criteria:  $< .20$  = Slight, between  $.21$  and  $.40$  = Acceptable, between  $.41$  and  $.60$  = Moderate, between  $.61$  and  $.80$  = Substantial and  $> .81$  = Almost perfect (Cerdeira & Villarreal, 2008). Differences in the frequencies of violence were analyzed using the Wilcoxon signed-rank test, which is a nonparametric statistic that compares the mean rank of two related samples and determines whether differences exist between them, interpreted according to Cohen's  $d$  (1988).

## 3. Results

To address the objectives of the study, the couples responses were analyzed to determine the percentage of violent and non-violent couples among the participants. The results found that 95.7% of the couples showed dominant and jealous tactics, and the 92.6% showed offline verbal aggression within their relationship. Regarding violent online behaviors, 85.2% showed controlling behaviors within their relationship, and 39.1% showed direct aggression. Within the violent couples, they identified that this violence occurred in a bidirectional way, but with different percentages depending on the scale: 70.9% in dominant and jealous tactics, 67.4% in offline verbal aggression, 41.7% in online control, and finally 4.8% in direct online aggression (see Table 1).

Regarding the occurrence of psychological violence in courtship, directed from women to men, the number of couples that coincided in identifying women as aggressors and men as victims, was higher in offline violence than online, reaching a 79.1% in dominant and jealous tactics, with direct online aggression being the least prevalent (10%). Statistically significant differences were found between the level of violence that women reported experiencing and the level of violence that men reported receiving, with the agreement being acceptable,

Table 1

*Prevalence of Intimate Partner Violence*

	No Violent Couple		Unidirectional Violent Couples		Bidirectional Violent Couples	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Jealousy and Control Offline	10	4.3	57	24.80	163	70.9
Verbal Aggression Offline	17	7.4	58	25.20	155	67.4
Direct Aggression Online	140	60.9	79	34.3	11	4.8
Control Online	34	14.8	100	43.50	96	41.7

with the exception of the online control, where moderate agreement was found (see Table 2).

In the opposite case, when the violence was directed from men to women, the percentage of agreement ranged from 82.6% to 72.2%. As in the case of violence directed from women to men, online control behaviors were those with the lowest percentage of agreement. The percentage of couples in which men considered themselves as aggressors, and women as victims was high in offline violent behaviors (73.9% dominant and jealous tactics and 71.7% offline verbal aggression). The results showed statistically significant discrepancies between the level of violence exercised by men and that received by women. Agreement was moderate for all forms of violence, both offline and online (see Table 2).

Regarding the agreement on the frequency of violence perpetrated by women against men, between both members, ranged from 25% to 70.27%, depending on the type of violence analyzed, indicating in most cases that this occurred rarely or in the case of online violence prior to last year. Significant differences were found in all forms of violence, with acceptable agreement found in all of them (see Table 3).

In the analysis of the mean of direct scores, the data showed a greater perception of perpetration by women, with the exception of direct aggression, in which a greater percentage of concordance was observed between both members. Significant differences were found in offline verbal aggression and online direct aggression (see Table 4).

In the opposite case, agreement on the frequency of violence perpetrated by men, percentages ranged from 70.88% to 21.25%. As in the previous case, most of the participants indicated that it occurred rarely or within the last year. Significant discrepancies were found in all forms of violence, with moderate agreement in online control and offline verbal aggression, being acceptable but bordering on moderate in the other two forms of violence (see Table 3). The analysis of the means yielded a greater perception of victimization by women in offline violence, whereas a greater concordance of violence was observed between both members in online violence. Significant differences were found only in dominant and jealous tactics (see Table 4).

Regarding the perception of victim and aggressor, the 93.5% of couples agreed with the non-perception of women as aggressors and men as victims. No statistically significant differences were found between men and women. On the contrary, 88.7% of the couples expressed a non-perception of men as aggressors and women as victims (see Table 5).

In this case, 19 women perceived themselves as victims, while their partners did not perceive themselves as aggressors, and significant discrepancies were found.

When analyzing the perception of online violence, 59.6% of the men and 74.3% of the women considered these behaviors to be violence (see Table 5). Sex significant differences were not found (Chi-square  $p > .05$ ). These percentages decreased when asked about the behaviors they indicated they engaged in (18.7% for men and 23.5% for women). In this case, significant differences were found between men and women (Chi-square  $p \leq .05$ ).

Finally, the reasons given for psychological violence in the relationship were analyzed. The five reasons that obtained the highest percentages for women's justification of violence were: concern (25.7%), jealousy (21.7%), gambling/joke (18.3%), personality (18.3%), and considering that they had never done these behaviors before (18.7%). These reasons coincide with the five justifications most frequently expressed by their partners. The level of agreement was acceptable for all the reasons given except for jealousy and absence of performance of such behaviors, which was moderate (see Table 6). Significant differences were found in all five reasons. The three other reasons given in the questionnaires were marginally chosen and scarcely relevant.

In the analysis of motives to justify the perpetration of violence by men, the same five reasons obtained the highest frequencies in a similar percentage and coincided with those expressed by their partners to justify the reception of these conducts (see Table 6). In this case, data yielded moderate agreement for concern and gambling/joke and acceptable agreement for the remaining justifications. Statistically significant differences were found in all five reasons.

**Table 2**

*Agreement on the Occurrence of Psychological Dating Violence, Directed from Women to Men*

	From women to men												Coefficient Kappa
	Aggressor-Victim Agreement		No Aggressor-no Victim Agreement		Total Couples Agreement		Aggressor-No Victim		No Aggressor-Victim		Coefficient Kappa		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Jealousy and Control Offline	182	79.1	12	5.2	194	84.3	24	10.4	12	5.2	.314		
Verbal Aggression Offline	166	72.2	19	8.3	185	80.5	27	11.7	17	7.4	.343		
Direct Aggression Online	23	10	151	65.7	174	75.7	21	9.1	35	15.2	.298		
Control Online	124	53.9	49	21.3	173	75.2	33	14.3	24	10.4	.446		

  

From men to women											
From women to men											
	Aggressor-Victim Agreement		No Aggressor-no Victim Agreement		Total Couples Agreement		Aggressor-No Victim		No Aggressor-Victim		Coefficient Kappa
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
	Jealousy and Control Offline	170	73.9	20	8.7	190	82.6	18	7.8	22	9.6
Verbal Aggression Offline	165	71.7	24	10.4	189	82.1	21	9.1	20	8.7	.429
Direct Aggression Online	19	8.3	171	74.3	190	82.6	18	7.8	22	9.6	.400
Control Online	108	47	58	25.2	166	72.2	32	13.9	32	13.9	.446

**Table 3**

*Agreement on the Frequency of Dating Violence*

	From women to men												Coefficient Kappa
	Previous to last year		Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently		Total Violent Couples Agreement		Coefficient Kappa		
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%			
Jealousy and Control Offline	—	—	139	63.18	10	4.54	3	1.36	152	69.09	.321		
Verbal Aggression Offline	—	—	140	65.73	10	4.54	0	0	150	70.27	.359		
Direct Aggression Online	20	25	0	0	0	0	0	0	20	25	.268		
Control Online	77	41.40	7	3.76	3	1.61	0	0	87	46.77	.338		

  

From men to women											
Aggressor-Victim Agreement											
	Previous to last year		Rarely		Sometimes		Frequently		Total Violent Couples Agreement		Coefficient Kappa
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
	Jealousy and Control Offline	—	—	139	63.18	7	3.18	2	.9	148	67.26
Verbal Aggression Offline	—	—	143	67.13	8	3.75	0	0	151	70.88	.420
Direct Aggression Online	16	20	1	1.25	0	0	0	0	17	21.25	.360
Control Online	74	39.78	7	3.76	5	2.68	2	1.07	88	47.29	.405

**Table 4**
*Agreement on the Frequency of Psychology Violence Perpetrated in the Violent Couples*

	From women to men						Z	d
	W > M		W = M		W < M			
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Jealousy and Control Offline	112	48.69	27	11.74	91	39.57	-1.264	.079
Verbal Aggression Offline	108	46.96	44	19.13	78	33.91	-2.351*	.121
Direct Aggression Online	29	12.60	158	68.70	43	18.70	-2.254*	.082
Control Online	87	37.83	68	29.57	75	32.60	-1.030	.069

  

	From men to women						Z	d
	W > M		W = M		W < M			
	n	%	n	%	n	%		
Jealousy and Control Offline	77	33.48	36	15.65	117	50.87	-2.714**	.166
Verbal Aggression Offline	80	34.78	58	25.22	92	40	-1.506	.096
Direct Aggression Online	23	10	176	76.52	31	13.48	-1.105	.100
Control Online	65	28.26	87	37.83	78	33.91	-1.696	.161

Note. W=Woman; M=Man; Z= Wilcoxon Range test; d= Cohen's d; \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Table 5**
*Perception of Violence*

Questions	Women		Men		Couples Agreement with the non-perception of W as aggressors and M as victims		Couples Agreement with the non-perception of M as aggressors and W as victims	
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
Do you perceive yourself as a victim of abuse or mistreatment in your current or past relationship?	21	9.1	11	4.8	215	93.5	204	88.7
Do you perceive yourself as an abusive person in your current or past relationship?	4	1.7	6	2.6				
Do you think that, in general, the behaviors described in the previous scale (CDAQ) about cell phones and social networks can be considered as psychological violence towards the partner?	171	74.3	137	59.6				
Do you think that the behaviors you have reported (CDAQ) performed by you or your partner through cell phones and social networks can be considered as psychological violence towards the partner?	54	23	43	18.7				

Note. W=Woman; M=Man.

**Table 6**
*Agreement on the Justifications for Perpetrating or Receiving Violence in the Relationship*

	Aggressor (Woman)		Victim (Man)		Kappa Coefficient		Aggressor (Women)		Victim (Women)		Kappa Coefficient
	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	
Jealousy	50	21.7	46	20	37	16.1	58	25.2	58	25.2	.30
Control	10	4.3	15	6.5	5	2.2	19	8.3	19	8.3	.13
Concern	59	25.7	63	27.4	65	28.3	59	25.7	59	25.7	.42
Bi-directionality	17	7.4	9	3.9	8	3.5	9	3.9	9	3.9	.32
In response	23	10	13	5.7	14	6.1	9	3.9	9	3.9	.40
Glambling/Joke	42	18.3	45	19.6	44	19.1	42	18.3	42	18.3	.42
Personality	42	18.3	52	22.6	43	18.3	53	23	53	23	.23
Absence	43	18.7	45	19.6	48	20.9	43	18.7	43	18.7	.38

#### 4. Discussion

The initial purpose of this research was to analyze the directionality and frequency of different offline and online violent behaviors of psychological violence in dyads, and to examine the degree of agreement of the partners in terms of the directionality and frequency of violent manifestations. The results indicated that hypothesis 1 is partially confirmed. In most cases, there was violence in the relationship, and it was bidirectional, as indicated by other studies, including the dyad (Aguilera-Jiménez et al., 2021; Graña & Cuenca, 2014; Herrero et al., 2020; Riesgo et al., 2019), except for direct online aggression (LaForte et al., 2023). According to these results, we can infer that offline violence has a greater presence than online violence, as reported by both partners. This is a novel contribution as there are no other dyad studies comparing both forms of violence. This fact is contrary to the idea that many people who use technological devices for communication feel less inhibited in their online interactions and might say things that they would not do face to face (Cava et al., 2020; Marganski & Melander, 2018). Previous research with young people has shown that cyber-aggression is significantly correlated with physical offline violence (Borrajo et al., 2015; Lu et al., 2021), and this fact could explain why it is less prevalent than other types of violence and it could indicate that individuals involved in psychological forms of online abuse would be at risk for involvement in those more severe forms of offline violence (Rodríguez-deArriba et al., 2024). Statistically significant differences were found in the perception of women in the role of aggressor and men in the role of victim and vice versa; similar results were found by Riesgo et al. (2019). However, an agreement was higher among dyad members when men played the role of perpetrator, and women played the role of victim. One possible explanation is that labeling oneself as abused is less frequent in men as, in theory, they should be more violent (López-Cepero et al., 2015). The percentages of agreement with the frequency were similar regardless of who the perpetrator and the victim were, and it is low, confirming hypothesis 2. Women report higher frequency in both the role of aggressor and victim than men, with the exception of the perpetration of direct online aggression, although in most cases, there were no significant differences. The fact that men report less levels of violence than women may indicate that the level of agreement is affected by sex (Aguilera-Jiménez et al., 2021; Riesgo et al., 2019).

With regard to the third hypothesis, the low perception of aggressors or victims by the participants is consistent with the findings in other studies (Bringas-Molleda et al., 2015; Pérez et al., 2020; Rojas-Solís & Romero-Méndez, 2022). Thus, it could be that being in a violent relationship is not always associated with its perception and recognition. In fact, it can be ob-

served that a large percentage of participants refer that the online violence questionnaire makes reference to violent behaviors, but when asked about the behaviors that they have recognized to perform, they express that they do not consider them as violence, partially confirming hypothesis 4. From these results, we can infer that they know how to discern a violent behavior from a non-violent one through the networks, but when they perform them, they do not recognize these behaviors as violent. This contrasts with the findings of several authors who report that violent behavior is associated to a greater extent with physical aggression, while acts related to psychological violence, such as control and emotional punishment, are not considered problematic aggressive behaviors (Cinquegrana et al., 2023; Cortés-Ayala et al., 2014; Gutiérrez et al., 2022). These results indicate that they know it is an online violent behavior, but maybe justify or reduce their relevance to avoid considering them this way. The romantic myths of love could explain these results. Jealousy and control behaviors could be considered signs of love, and adolescents could perceive some abusive behaviors as being normal in a romantic relationship, and even perceive them as an expressions of love by the partner (Cava et al., 2020; García-Díaz et al., 2018; Martínez et al., 2024). These results connect with the last hypothesis of the research, which is confirmed. The most frequent justifications were similar for both perpetration and victimization by both partners. These justifications imply the impact of romantic myths of love. They express concern as the main reason for receiving or engaging in violent behaviors in their intimate partner relationship, along with jealousy or gambling and there is an acceptable concordance for the reasons given by both partners. Similar results have also been found in other studies (Alegria & Rodríguez, 2017; Bonilla et al., 2017; Borrajo & Gámez-Guadix, 2015; Rojas-Solís & Romero-Méndez, 2023). In this sense, control is misunderstood as a sign of concern, and jealousy is considered a sign of love and the possible coexistence of love and abuse in a relationship.

In spite of the above, bidirectionality does not imply symmetry in the seriousness of the acts, nor the consequences suffered by both sexes, since violent acts by men against women are more dangerous and the health consequences more serious for women (Alcalá et al., 2021; Muñoz-Rivas et al., 2007). In fact, in the study conducted by Cava et al. (2020) the physical aggression variable was the most predictive variable for the perpetration of direct online aggression in boys, followed by offline verbal-emotional aggression, while in women, physical aggression was not a predictor variable, but offline verbal-emotional aggression was, thus, the development of violence may differ between the two partners over time. In addition, although myths of romantic love influence both sexes, previous studies report that these myths could have a stronger impact on girls (Cava et

al., 2020, 2020). It is important to continue examining these myths of romantic love and their relationship to other variables in order to reduce or eliminate their effect on perceived abusive behavior in the relationship. It has been identified that adolescents who do not perceive violence in their relationships are unlikely to end their relationship, seek support, or/and make use of available resources (Rojas-Solís & Romero-Méndez, 2022).

The importance of this study resides in that psychological violence is an antecedent of other forms of intimate partner violence, such as physical and sexual abuse. However, psychological violence is often underreported or not recognized (Cinquegrana et al., 2023). This study contributes by analyzing the two levels (offline and online violence) allowing us to have a deeper understanding of its forms of manifestation. Moreover, it helps us to know which is the perception of psychological violence in young couple relationships, and the justifications that young people make to continue with these abusive behaviors. It further could help to explain the relationship between the endorsement of intimate partner violence myths and the perpetration and acceptance of psychological violence.

However, there are also some limitations. The study is cross-sectional and gives us a picture in a temporal point, but studies along time could help to address the dynamics in the perceptions of the youngest. Also, the sample was small and should be expanded, and it could be interesting to include other sexual orientation couples. Finally, data are collected through self-reporting, which could lead to social desirability on the part of the participants.

Despite the above limitations, this study has overcome one of the major criticisms of studies that analyze violence in couples, since it collects information from both partners, especially at the online level. Moreover, while most of the studies are predominantly of psychology students, the present study involved different levels of education and a wide range of faculties from different universities, which is a contribution. Furthermore, the analysis of motives by both members can provide great information about the romantic myths of love when developing intervention programs.

## 5. Conclusion

In sum, we observe that adolescents and young people are immersed in relationships in which psychological violence is present, although there is a greater presence of offline psychological violence compared to online violence, especially direct online aggression. This study also highlights the low perception that young people have as aggressors and/or victims of psychological violence in their relationships. Concluding, this study not only delves deeper into the phenomenon of violence in adolescent and young couples, but also highlights the

importance of psychological violence, which has received less attention from the social and scientific point of view despite having the highest prevalence rates, as well as the serious consequences of it.

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