

Intimate partner violence perpetrators' response to an emotion induction task: Facial expressions and sexism

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The current study investigates possible neuropsychological markers associated with neurocriminogenic factors in Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) perpetration.

Current studies revealed that men condemned for IPV show deficits in their capacity to empathize. Empathy is a cognitive-affective ability, associated with the mirror neuron system, and its deterioration is associated with violent behaviors. It activates both when individuals perform an action, and when they observe others performing the same action, affecting therefore, the tendency to automatically imitate and synchronize facial expressions with the interlocutor. Ergo, the implementation of an instrument of facial recognition of emotions could be a reliable option to evaluate the empathic response.

For this purpose, we analysed the effects of an empathic induction task, mainly based on IPV emotion-eliciting videos, in the facial expressions of a group of IPV perpetrators (n=55) compared to non-violent controls (n=48). Additionally, we explored the predictive capacity of sexism (measured with Ambivalent Sexism Inventory) in the facial expressions' responses to the task, being this important attitudinal risk factor for IPV. Our data revealed that IPV perpetrators exhibited higher sexism scores than controls. Regarding the facial expressions' responses to the task, IPV perpetrators had lower prevalence of negative affect facial expressions after the empathic induction with respect to the control group. On the other hand, the IPV perpetrators did exhibit a higher prevalence of positive facial expressions when dealing with IPV videos. Furthermore, the higher the sexism scores, the higher the prevalence of positive affect facial expressions after the empathic induction task, being this association equal for both groups. The predictive ability of the sexism score was not significant for facial expressions of negative affect.

Importance of Research: To prevent IPV, a growing number of studies have focused on IPV perpetrators profile, identifying various characteristics relevant to IPV severity and recidivism. However, it has been highlighted the need to approach IPV from a multidimensional bio psychosocial framework, bringing together the psychosocial factors of IPV with biological markers that provide data less susceptible to bias and manipulation than self-reported questionnaires general and in the Valencia society in particular.

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Biography

Luis Moya Albiol is Full Professor of the Department of Psychobiology in the University of Valencia (Spain). His PhD in Psychology and Neurosciences was qualified cum laude and awarded due to its exceptionality. He is the director of the first world Master in Neurocriminology and teaches in both Psychology and Criminology graduate and postgraduate studies. He is the main researcher of a scientific team focused on Social Neuroscience, concretely in subjects as social stress, violence, cooperation and empathy. He has published more than 200 papers in reputed journals, together with several scientific and informative books. He is very involved in both the transfer and the exchange of knowledge, which is why he has promoted agreements and collaborations with associations, companies and other universities. It is also distinguished by its contribution to the dissemination of science in television, radio, specialized magazines and the press.

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