

Partner Preferences, Dating Expectations, and Dating Violence among Moroccan and Spanish Adolescents in Southeastern Spain

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This study investigates partner preferences, dating expectations, and teen dating violence (TDV) among Spanish and Moroccan adolescents, focusing on cultural and gender differences. A cross-sectional survey was conducted in 18 public schools located in disadvantaged, rural, suburban, and multicultural areas of southeastern Spain, with a sample of 1,002 students: 778 Spanish (77.6%) and 224 first- or second-generation Moroccan immigrant youth. The findings reveal significant cultural distinctions in relationship norms and expectations. Moroccan adolescents, particularly females, are more likely to remain single, influenced by cultural values that prioritize premarital virginity and marriage. Spanish adolescents emphasize intrinsic relationship qualities such as fidelity and communication, while Moroccan peers – especially males – place greater importance on extrinsic factors like beauty and sexuality. Moroccan females prioritize religious and cultural partner compatibility, in contrast to the relative indifference of Spaniards toward nationality and religion. Both groups exhibit high levels of TDV, with Moroccan adolescents reporting greater victimization and perpetration. Regression analyses highlight that extrinsic relationship preferences are associated with increased TDV, particularly among Moroccan adolescents, whereas intrinsic preferences are linked to lower violence among Spaniards.

Key words: partner references, dating expectations, teen dating violence, cross-cultural analysis, adolescents

Introduction

The Importance of Cultural Factors in Understanding Violence

One of the persistent debates about interpersonal violence revolves around its origin

and its main triggering factors. Traditionally, research has emphasized structural factors, such as socioeconomic and political conditions, acknowledging that individuals living in contexts of inequality face a heightened risk of experiencing violence. Members of subordinate groups – defined by gender, ethnicity, social class, or sexual orientation – are partic-

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ularly vulnerable and tend to report higher levels of violence (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention [CDC], 2016; Krivo, Peterson, & Kuhl, 2009). From this perspective, violence is understood as a mechanism through which those in positions of privilege sustain inequality and protect their threatened advantages. While cultural factors in dating violence receive less attention and are criticized for ignoring power dynamics, research emphasizes the interplay between cultural and structural factors, advocating for an integrated approach (Cuevas et al., 2021).

Cultural analysis of violence shows how it is embedded and reproduced through daily life, including norms, values, ideologies, religion, art, and media (Galtung, 1990). This approach has been applied to romantic relationships, emotions, and dating violence. Terms like “affective cultures,” “emotional communities,” and “emotional regimes” describe how socio-economic and cultural groups share common emotional experiences and bonds (De Leersnyder et al., 2013; Kitayama et al., 2022; Karandashev, 2021). Le Breton (1999) highlighted that personal experiences and emotional expression are shaped by the meanings and beliefs embedded within an emotional culture – a complex system where each emotion is interconnected with a larger framework. Consequently, different groups and cultural contexts, each defined by unique emotional frameworks, foster distinct forms of violence with specific manifestations (Rai et al., 2023; Tutenges & Sandberg, 2023).

The Concepts of Cultural Partner Preferences and Dating Expectations

Romantic relationships in adolescence, such as dating, vary according to social, cultural, historical, and political-economic contexts (Reedy, 2001). These relationships can be analyzed from the socioeconomic structure

or from cultural values (Dion & Dion, 1991; Cadwell-Harries et al., 2013; Bello et al., 2010). For example, in individualistic societies, romantic love is often viewed as a means of self-realization and personal fulfillment; whereas collectivist societies prioritize family and community bonds, with romantic choices reflecting social norms and shared values (Delevi & Bugai, 2010). These cultural values serve as the foundation for individual preferences and expectations, shaping the traits and characteristics people find appealing in partners and relationships (Albert & Whetten, 1985).

Partner preferences refer to the traits that attract or repel individuals in choosing mates (Karandashev, 2024). Evolutionary perspectives explain these preferences as adaptations favoring traits that aided human survival (Conroy-Beam et al., 2022). Meanwhile, a more contextual approach, developed from sociology and anthropology, uses the term partner preferences to analyze the psychological, social, and cultural factors that affect the choice or rejection of potential mates according to the characteristics and attributes valued in their social and cultural environments. Sprecher and Reagan (2002) classified partner preferences into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic preferences involve personal qualities such as intelligence, warmth, friendliness, a sense of humor, and an engaging personality. Extrinsic preferences, on the other hand, are related to social status, including ambition, economic stability, and social prestige. The same authors also considered sexual aspects, such as passion or previous sexual experience, in evaluating a partner.

On the other hand, dating expectations (Burgoon, 1993) are requirements that are considered appropriate for a relationship, such as marriage or having children, and they are influenced by social and cultural contexts. Although the terms are often used inter-

changeably, they differ: preferences express desired outcomes that may not materialize, while expectations are tied to anticipated behaviors and can lead to dissatisfaction when unmet.

Influence of Partner Preferences and Dating Expectations on Intimate Partner Violence

Research has extensively examined the link between partner preferences, romantic expectations, and dating violence in ethnic groups, sociocultural minorities (Closson et al., 2024; Debnam et al., 2017), and national populations (González-Méndez et al., 2015, 2017). González-Méndez et al. (2017) classified partner preferences into three types: good (intelligence, honesty, kindness, humor), risky (rule-breaking, rebelliousness, jealousy, control), and loving or affectionate (romantic and caring). Their study found that a preference for risky partners predicted dating violence perpetration and victimization, particularly among individuals exposed to intra-familial violence partner. Conversely, a preference for affectionate partners moderated the link between exposure to gender-based violence and the perpetration of sexual violence. Additionally, media and social networks have been shown to influence partner preferences, fostering harmful stereotypes that heighten the risk of violence (Kulkarni et al., 2019).

This research was guided by three primary objectives. The first was to examine the similarities and differences in partner preferences and dating expectations among adolescents of Moroccan and Spanish origin. The second objective was to explore their experiences with dating violence, encompassing both victimization and perpetration. The third objective aimed to evaluate the predictive capacity of these variables in determining the likelihood of adolescents perpetrating dating violence.

Research questions (RQs)

RQ1. Do adolescents of Moroccan and Spanish origin have the same partner preferences and dating expectations according to gender and origin?

RQ2. Are there any differences in the rates of victimization and perpetration of intimate partner violence among adolescents of Moroccan and Spanish origins?

RQ3. What is the relationship and predictive capacity of partner preferences and dating expectations on victimization and perpetration of violence?

Hypotheses

H1. In relation to partner preferences, Spaniards present more extrinsic preferences toward their partners, driven by more mercantilizing frameworks, and Moroccans present more intrinsic or traditional preferences toward their partners.

H2. The dating expectations of Moroccans are more focused on marriage and starting a family, while Spaniards focus on enjoyment and having a good time.

H3. Moroccan men are more likely to use physical violence in adolescent dating, while Moroccan women are more likely to use relational and psychological violence.

H4. More utilitarian partner preferences toward the partner and traditional dating expectations will be more predictive of the exercise of violence.

Method

Setting and Participants

Eighteen public secondary schools located in disadvantaged, rural, suburban, and multicultural areas of southeastern Spain were select-

ed for this cross-sectional study by probability sampling. The total project sample consisted of 2,104 students between the ages of 13 and 20, which is equivalent to grades 7 to 12 in the United States. The present study focused on a subset of that sample ($n = 1,784$), students whose origins were Spanish ($n = 1,256$) or Moroccan ($n = 528$), considering that these were the two largest groups. Since the second part of the study focused on dating violence, the analyses excluded young people who reported never having been in romantic relationships. Thus, the final sample for this analysis consisted of 1,002 students (Table 1): 778 Spanish students (77.6%) and 224 first- or second-generation Moroccan immigrant youth (Portes & Rumbaut, 2001). In southeastern Spain, students of Moroccan origin are mainly the children of economic immigrants. The vast majority of students, who self-identified as Moroccan, reported being Muslim (94%), and more than a third of the young people, who self-identified as Spanish, reported being Catholic (35%). The mean age of the students was 15.3 years ($SD = 1.39$). The sample of Moroccans and Spaniards was evenly distributed by gender.

Instruments

Sociodemographic and relationship characteristics. The survey included age, sex, country of birth, family origin, religion, sexual orientation, relationship status, and preferences/indifferences for partners of the same cultural or religious group.

Partner Preferences Scale. I developed this scale composed of 11 items. Students were asked to respond to the importance or preference they attached to each attribute or trait in the partner: not at all (0), a little (1), quite important (2), and very important (3). After performing Bartlett's test of sphericity, with a chi-square value of 4381.06 ($gl = 55$)

and a KMO index of 0.836, an exploratory factor analysis of the scale was carried out, resulting in two factors. The total reliability of the scale, estimated with Cronbach's alpha, was 0.755. The two factors identified were classified as follows: 1) *Extrinsic Preferences* (3 items): Traits like physical appearance, status, and sexual appeal 2) *Intrinsic Preferences* (8 items): Traits fostering emotional bonds, such as loyalty, communication, respect, and affection. Cronbach's alpha = 0.755.

Dating Expectations Questionnaire. A 12-item yes/no questionnaire covering traditional (e.g., marriage, family, premarital virginity) and liberal (e.g., freedom, enjoyment, multiple partners) expectations, alongside affection-related expectations like feeling loved and accepted.

Teen Dating Violence (TDV) victimization scale. A 31-item scale measuring violence experienced from a romantic partner (Soriano-Ayala et al., 2021). Six factors were identified: physical violence, relational violence, emotional violence, sexual violence, cyber violence, and control (online/offline). Higher scores indicate greater victimization. Goodness-of-fit: CMIN/DF = 3.9; CFI = 0.915; IFI = 0.916; TLI = 0.90; GFI = 0.926, and RMSEA = 0.051.

TDV perpetration scale. A 28-item scale measuring violence committed against a romantic partner. Six factors included physical, emotional, relational, and sexual violence, as well as humiliation and control (online/offline). Goodness-of-fit: CMIN/DF = 4.08; CFI = 0.911; IFI = 0.912; GFI = 0.926, and RMSEA = 0.052.

Procedure

To enter the secondary schools, the Provincial Delegation of Education granted permission to the researchers. In addition, once parental consent was obtained, the school board approved the study. Inside the students' classrooms and in the presence of the teacher, the project researchers administered the ques-

tionnaire. Before completing the questionnaire, the research assistant informed the participants about the objectives of the research, the confidentiality of their responses, and the exclusively academic use of the data. The study was approved by the Bioethics Committee on Human Research at the University of Almería.

Analysis

Factor analysis: The study began with a factor analysis of the scales.

Descriptive and comparative analysis: For Research Questions 1 (RQ1) and 2 (RQ2), descriptive and comparative analyses were conducted on partner preferences, relationship expectations, and intimate partner violence (victimization and perpetration) by origin and gender. The Mann–Whitney U test was used for mean score comparisons between boys and girls within each country due to the non-normal distribution of the scales.

Regression analysis: For RQ3, generalized linear modeling (GzLM) with Poisson distributions and an identity link function was used to assess the predictive influence of preferences and expectations on violence, given the non-normality of the dependent variables and their Poisson distribution. All omnibus tests ($p < 0.05$), along with AIC and BIC values, confirmed the model's fit. Predictor significance was assessed using β -significance and χ^2 Wald tests.

Software: All data analyses were performed using SPSS 29.0.

Results

Description of the Couple Relationship: Relationship, Cultural Preferences, and Influence of Social Agents

The first result refers to the relationship situation of adolescents: 35.6% of Spanish ado-

lescents and 53.4% of Moroccan adolescents had never been in a relationship. Of the 64.4% of Spaniards with experience in relationships, 42.1% are currently in one, 16.1% ended their relationships less than two months ago, and 41.8% ended their relationships more than two months ago. Among Moroccans, 45.6% had been in a relationship: 26.7% are in one, 22.9% ended it recently, and 52.4% ended it more than two months ago. Moroccan teenagers are more likely to be single than Spaniards.

As for cultural and religious preferences within romantic relationships, 62.6% of Spaniards and 39.9% of Moroccans are indifferent to the nationality and religion of their partner. Twenty-five percent of Spanish men prefer partners of the same nationality, being the group that most demands coincidence in nationality. Moroccans, especially women, prioritize partners who share religion or religion and nationality. More than 50% of Moroccans (more than 60% if we look exclusively at Moroccan women) prefer that their partners at least share their religion. In contrast, almost 70% of Spanish women choose regardless of religion or nationality.

The influence that young people attribute to socialization agents in romantic relationships also showed differences between groups. Moroccans are more influenced by the religious community ($\chi^2 = 477.4$; $p < 0.01$), family ($\chi^2 = 57.1$; $p < 0.01$), media ($\chi^2 = 41.3$; $p < 0.01$), social networks ($\chi^2 = 20.6$; $p < 0.01$), and community ($\chi^2 = 10.3$; $p < 0.05$), while Spaniards recognize very low figures of influence of all, significantly lower than those of Moroccans.

RQ1. Partner Preferences and Dating Expectations

The analysis of partner preferences in adolescents (Table 1) reveals that respect, fidelity, and sincerity are the most valued values,

Table 1 *Partner preferences by origin and gender groups. Test for median.*

		Descriptives						Culture comparison
		Spanish			Moroccans			(among genders)
		<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Med</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>Med</i>	Test median
Extrinsic preferences (<i>beauty, sex and fashion</i>)	<i>M</i>	578	4.63	5	204	5.02	5	Um: 6.8*
	<i>F</i>	594	4.17	4	257	4.10	4	Um: 1.31
Gender comparison (among origin)		Um: 16.6 **			Um: 22.9**			
Intrinsic preferences (<i>fun, loyalty, sincerity, commitment, affection, protection, communicative, respect</i>)	<i>M</i>	563	19.46	20	184	18.02	19	Um: 11.2**
	<i>F</i>	591	20.69	21	226	19.95	21	Um: 5.4*
Gender comparison (among origin)		Um: 19.1**			Um: 21.8**			

Note. *M* – mean; *Med* – Median, *Um* – Mann Whitney U test with median

while beauty, active sexuality, and modernity are the least valued. However, there are differences between genders and nationalities. Beauty is more highly valued by men, especially Moroccans ($\chi^2 = 125.5$; $p = 0.000$), while commitment stands out more among Spaniards, especially women ($\chi^2 = 23.2$; $p = 0.006$). Fidelity is highly valued by Spaniards, with almost 93% ($\chi^2 = 95.7$; $p = 0.000$). Sexual activity matters more to men, especially Moroccans ($\chi^2 = 83.2$; $p = 0.000$), and sincerity is preferred by women of both countries ($\chi^2 = 88.2$; $p = 0.000$). Fun is valued more by women, especially Moroccans ($\chi^2 = 61.7$; $p = 0.000$), and respect is prioritized by women of both nationalities ($\chi^2 = 175.4$; $p = 0.000$).

Spaniards value the expression of affection more, especially Spanish men and Moroccan women, while Moroccan men give it less importance (with only 40% considering it very important). Communication is more valued by women, especially Spanish women ($\chi^2 = 106.5$; $p = 0.000$), and protection is valued by Moroccan women ($\chi^2 = 33.2$; $p = 0.000$). Fashion is more respected by Moroccans

($\chi^2 = 32.1$; $p = 0.000$). Regarding extrinsic or status preferences, such as beauty, sexuality, and fashion, Moroccan men score higher than Spaniards, while no significant differences are observed between women of both cultures.

Regarding romantic expectations (Table 2), the most valued objectives for all groups are to have fun and to feel loved. Forming a family, feeling wanted, and being socially accepted do not differ between groups. The most important expectations for Moroccans, with significant differences, include being married, having premarital virginity, having several partners simultaneously, and aligning with religious/cultural beliefs, the latter being the biggest difference with Spaniards. For their part, Spaniards prioritize having a good time, enjoying shared sexuality, being accepted by their family, avoiding loneliness, feeling loved, and having freedom.

RQ2. TDV by Gender and Country of Origin

The analysis of violence in adolescent couples (Table 3) shows that control is the most

Table 2 *Dating expectation by origin and gender groups. Percentages of agreement.*

	Males		χ^2 (males)	Females		χ^2 (females)
	Spanish	Moroccans		Spanish	Moroccans	
Marriage	37.8%	40.0%	0.33	32.9%	49.8%	23.46**
Founding a family	48.9%	44.5%	1.18	43.5%	45.7%	0.38
Having a good time	86.8%	75.4%	15.16**	90.3%	84.1%	7.091*
Premarital virginity	8.1%	19.9%	21.84**	11.0%	38.6%	93.50**
Enjoying sexuality	26.5%	26.5%	0.00	32.9%	18.1%	20.49**
Family acceptance	60.5%	51.7%	5.046*	65.7%	62.5%	0.89
Accompaniment/ no loneliness	76.6%	63.0%	14.45**	81.0%	75.8%	3.19
Freedom to have other partners	2.5%	6.6%	7.55*	1.8%	4.7%	6.42*
Feeling wanted	47.0%	44.1%	0.55	53.9%	51.6%	0.40
Feeling loved	87.2%	69.7%	33.20**	96.8%	84.8%	43.11**
Freedom to do what I want	50.8%	38.9%	8.83*	75.9%	70.0%	3.46*
Cultural/ideological coincidence	13.7%	33.2%	38.86**	15.3%	50.2%	121.11**

Note. Bolded values indicate statistically significant differences.

common form, both suffered and exercised. In victimization, 62.5% of Spaniards and 75.5% of Moroccans have suffered control, followed by relational violence (40.4% Spaniards and 40.8% Moroccans), physical (26.5% and 38.5%, respectively), psychoemotional (21.4% and 30.6%, respectively), sexual (23.0% and 25.0%, respectively), and cyber violence (12.5% and 15.5%, respectively). Moroccans report higher victimization and perpetration of violence than Spaniards. Interestingly, both Spanish and Moroccan men experience more physical violence, with a higher incidence in Moroccans. Spanish women experience more relational violence, while Moroccan women suffer more control.

In terms of perpetration, 51.3% of Spaniards and 69.7% of Moroccans exercise control, while 20.1% of Spaniards and 25.7% of Moroccans have humiliated their partners. Psychoemotional violence is exercised by 12.1% of Spaniards and 17.5% of Moroccans,

physical violence by 7.7% and 21.4%, respectively, sexual violence by 8.9% and 17.7%, respectively, and relational violence by 7.5% and 10.4%, respectively. Except for humiliation, Moroccans show higher levels of perpetration in all types of violence.

By gender, men perpetrate more violence in general, except in control and humiliation, where women stand out. Moroccan men perpetrate more psychoemotional, relational, and sexual violence than Spanish men and Moroccan women. It should be noted that Moroccan women exercise control almost twice as much as Moroccan men and Spanish women.

RQ3. Regression Analyses of Partner Preferences and Dating Expectations on Dating Violence Perpetration

GzLM regressions were performed to examine the influence of partner preferences and

Table 3 Victimization and perpetration of Teen Dating Violence by gender and origin

Violence subtypes		Spaniards				Moroccans			Cultural comparison
		Gender	N	M	DS	N	M	DS	U/ t
TDV victimization (violence suffered)	Physical Violence	Male	366	0.67	1.09	101	1.42	1.86	U: 13949.5**
		Female	377	0.22	0.78	118	0.38	1.03	t:-1.57*
	Gender comparison	U:50707**			U: 2237**				
	Psycho-Emotional Violence	Male	358	1.03	1.91	92	1.11	1.76	t: -1.11
		Female	369	1.26	2.30	113	0.79	1.73	t:1.13
	Gender comparison	t: -1.496			t: 1.08				
	Relational Violence	Male	354	0.51	1.16	93	0.67	1.53	t: -0.37
		Female	371	0.70	1.65	110	0.51	1.24	t:2.03*
	Gender comparison	t: -1.838*			t: 0.60				
	Sexual Violence	Male	352	0.62	1.53	93	0.74	1.84	t:-0.64
		Female	365	0.87	2.36	109	0.55	1.52	t:1.34
	Gender comparison	t: -1.667			t: 0.67				
	CyberViolence	Male	352	0.22	0.88	83	0.29	1.11	t: -0.62
		Female	370	0.34	1.18	114	0.31	1.08	t:0.23
	Gender comparison	t: -1.497			t: -0.13				
Control	Male	340	3.59	5.94	80	4.20	5.39	t: -0.84	
	Female	361	4.09	7.29	105	5.26	6.79	U: 15982.1*	
Gender comparison	t: -0.998			t: -1.48*					
TDV perpetration (violence committed)	Physical Violence	Male	362	0.08	0.48	97	0.49	1.37	t:-4.76**
		Female	378	0.13	0.46	120	0.35	0.98	t:-3.40**
	Gender comparison	t: -1.35			t: 1.16				
	Psycho-Emotional Violence	Male	360	0.09	0.34	97	0.46	1.48	t: -4.41**
		Female	378	0.10	0.37	120	0.15	0.80	t:-1.04
	Gender comparison	t: -0.244			t: 2.22*				
	Relational Violence	Male	355	0.16	0.62	92	0.33	1.30	t: -1.75*
		Female	371	0.16	0.46	110	0.26	0.71	t:-1.78*
	Gender comparison	t: -0.029			t: 0.51				
	Humiliation	Male	346	0.28	0.85	82	0.35	0.99	t: -0.71
		Female	366	0.33	0.81	112	0.43	0.91	t:-1.06
	Gender comparison	t: -0.9			t: -0.46				
	Sexual Violence	Male	343	0.29	0.95	81	0.46	0.99	t: -1.39
		Female	357	0.06	0.30	110	0.17	0.60	t:-2.58**
	Gender comparison	t: 4.335*			t: 2.90**				
Control	Male	339	1.67	3.22	78	2.63	4.02	t: -2.26*	
	Female	357	2.29	3.57	106	4.90	6.95	U: 14861**	
Gender comparison	U:52132**			t: -2.74**					

Note. Bolded values indicate statistically significant differences.

relationship expectations on adolescent dating violence. Tables 4 and 5 present the models for the Spanish and Moroccan populations.

Table 4 assesses the impact of extrinsic and intrinsic preferences on victimization and violence perpetration. Both factors predict violence to a lesser extent in Spaniards and have a higher predictive weight in Moroccans. Specifically, extrinsic preferences have less influence on Spaniards ($\beta = 0.24$) than on

Moroccans ($\beta = 0.37$), while intrinsic preferences also show a lower impact on Spaniards ($\beta = 0.20$) compared to Moroccans ($\beta = 0.48$). This suggests that the type of cultural partner preference plays a more relevant role in the violence suffered by Moroccans. Regarding the perpetration of violence, extrinsic preferences significantly increase the violence perpetrated, especially in Moroccans ($\beta = 0.65$) compared to Spaniards ($\beta = 0.20$). Although intrinsic preferences predict less violence in

Table 4 *Generalized Lineal Model (GzLM) of partner-preferences on TDV victimization and perpetration*

	Spanish			Moroccan		
	β	Wald	p	β	Wald	p
TDV victimization						
Extrinsic preferences	0.24	11.68	0.00**	0.37	7.79	0.01*
Intrinsic preferences	0.20	25.31	0.00**	0.48	48.14	0.00**
TDV perpetration						
Extrinsic preferences	0.20	14.51	0.00**	0.65	42.42	0.00**
Intrinsic preferences	-0.09	9.20	0.00**	0.08	1.27	0.26

Note. β – (Estimated Coefficient), Wald – (Wald Chi-Square – a statistical test that assesses the significance of estimated coefficients). Bolded values indicate statistically significant results ($p < .05$).

Table 5 *Generalized Lineal Model (GzLM) of dating-expectations on TDV perpetration*

	Spaniards			Moroccan		
	β	Wald	p	β	Wald	p
Marriage	-0.19	17.03	0.00**	0.13	3.39	0.06
Founding a family	0.12	6.48	0.01*	-0.08	1.39	0.24
Having a good time	-0.08	1.78	0.18	0.54	38.65	0.00**
Premarital virginity	0.00	0.00	0.99	0.10	3.04	0.06
Enjoying sexuality	-0.17	21.77	0.00**	-0.23	12.80	0.00**
Family acceptance	-0.22	29.03	0.00**	-0.22	9.90	0.00**
Accompaniment/ no loneliness	0.23	27.47	0.00**	-0.16	3.66	0.07
Freedom to have other partners	-0.27	5.48	0.02*	0.83	21.66	0.00**
Feeling desired	-0.04	1.04	0.31	0.03	0.25	0.62
Feeling loved	-0.08	1.37	0.24	0.14	3.58	0.06
Freedom to do what I want	-0.04	0.87	0.35	-0.31	24.46	0.00**
Cultural coincidence	0.05	0.97	0.32	-0.49	57.32	0.00**

Note. Bolded values indicate statistically significant results ($p < .05$).

Spaniards ($\beta = -0.09$), their effect is not significant in Moroccans ($\beta = 0.08$).

Table 5 analyzes expectations in relation to violence perpetration, as the correlations with victimization were low. The analysis shows clear cultural differences in the expectations associated with intimate partner violence. In Spaniards, it reduces the perpetration of violence ($\beta = -0.27$), while in Moroccans, freedom to have other partners significantly increases the perpetration of violence ($\beta = 0.83$). Other factors that decrease violence in Spaniards include being married ($\beta = -0.19$), enjoying shared sexuality ($\beta = -0.17$), and being accepted by family ($\beta = -0.22$). However, expectations such as founding a family ($\beta = 0.12$) and avoiding loneliness ($\beta = 0.23$) increase the risk of violence. Meanwhile, in Moroccans, family acceptance ($\beta = -0.22$), shared sexuality ($\beta = -0.23$), individual freedom ($\beta = -0.31$), and cultural/religious coincidence ($\beta = -0.49$) are associated with less violence. In contrast, fun ($\beta = 0.54$) and freedom to have other partners significantly increase the perpetration of violence in this group.

Discussion

This study explores partner preferences and relationship expectations and their relationship with dating violence in adolescents of Moroccan and Spanish origins. To understand the results, the relational status of the adolescents was previously taken into account. The first relevant finding is the high level of singleness recognized by young people of all groups, which appears more accentuated in those of Moroccan origin, especially females (Kanth, 2023). This can be related to the norms and family values of Islam (Cala & Soriano, 2023), which prevent the establishment of partners in adolescence to preserve sexual purity, premarital virginity, and marriage – with a higher level of control over these

norms in women – and to improve the chances of academic success (understanding that partners can be a distractor for the completion of studies). On the other hand, cultural and national preferences for partners are also relevant. Moroccan women prefer partners of the same religion and nationality, a strategy that reinforces their cultural identity (Ragavan et al., 2021). Moroccan men, however, value Spanish partners more highly. These preferences may be associated with differences in dating expectations between Moroccan men and women (Soriano-Ayala et al., 2021). Regarding the social agents that affect couple relationships, it can be seen that Spaniards adopt a more individualistic conception, influenced by internal issues and less affected by external agents. Young Moroccans, on the other hand, are more influenced by family and the religious community, coinciding with studies on collectivist communities (Clemente et al., 2008). The differences in the individualistic or collectivist orientation in the couple, along the lines of Delevi and Bugai (2010), offer a framework that allows us to understand some differences in the preferences and expectations of Spaniards and Moroccans.

The analysis of partner preferences and relationship expectations (RQ1) reveals notable similarities alongside cultural and gender-based differences (Danioni et al., 2023). Across the four groups – Moroccan men, Spanish men, Moroccan women, and Spanish women – preferences and expectations suggest shared “affective worlds” or emotional regimes shaped by origin and gender (Von Scheve, 2014), without relying on cultural stereotypes (Berg & Ramos-Zayas, 2015).

Preferences are tied to cultural motivations within social structures (Zentner & Eagly, 2017). Moroccan men prioritize extrinsic traits like beauty, fun, and sexuality, linked to social capital and status. Moroccan women emphasize male protection to preserve cul-

tural identity. Spaniards focus on stability and commitment, reflecting a shift toward more neoliberal and fluid forms of bonding (Palmer, 2020). Men from both cultures show stronger extrinsic preferences, reinforcing patriarchal views of relationships (Baez et al., 2017).

Relationship expectations are broadly similar across groups, with fun and feeling loved highly valued. This reflects globalization, social media influences, and cultural assimilation among Moroccan immigrants, narrowing differences between Moroccan and Spanish youth (Ruiz-Román & Rascón, 2017; Cala & Soriano, 2023). However, Moroccans maintain more traditional expectations regarding marriage, premarital virginity, and religious compatibility (Haqqani, 2013). Some Moroccan adolescents, influenced by the legacy of polygamy, express openness to multiple partners, despite recent legal reforms in Morocco (Pham, 2013).

These findings contradict H1, as Moroccan men show more extrinsic preferences than Spaniards, who, especially women, favor intrinsic traits. Spaniards reflect individualistic values, emphasizing personal gratification, sexuality, love, and freedom (Kemmelmeyer, 2002; Karandashev, 2019). Moroccan preferences focus on ideological and religious compatibility. Spanish women value commitment, fidelity, and communication, while Moroccan women stress protection and adopt more conservative views on couple roles. These results align with H2, affirming that premarital virginity and marriage remain more highly valued among Moroccans.

The analysis of violence suffered and perpetrated (**RQ2**) shows high levels in both groups, with distinct patterns. Control is prevalent, affecting over 50% of Spaniards and nearly 70% of Moroccans, reflecting how jealousy and control characterize adolescent relationships. Social networks amplify this behavior, normalizing virtual control through vigilante

actions and moral disconnection (Rodríguez de Arriba et al., 2023).

Moroccans, especially women, report higher levels of control, physical, and relational violence (Sanmartín-Andújar et al., 2021). Physical violence is more frequently reported by Moroccan men, though these incidents often involve minor acts like pushing or slapping, sometimes mistaken as playful interactions. Relational violence is more common among Spanish women, aligning with research on its social impact in this group (Putallaz et al., 2007).

In perpetration, Moroccan men lead in physical, psychoemotional, and relational violence compared to Spaniards, consistent with studies linking higher violence rates to immigrant groups (Walsh et al., 2016). They also perpetrate more psychoemotional and sexual violence than Moroccan women. However, Moroccan women report exerting more control, physical, and sexual violence than Spanish women, supporting the idea of bidirectional but asymmetrical violence (Arnosó et al., 2022). Men tend toward more expressive, physical violence, while women use subtler forms like control (Swan et al., 2008; Dardis et al., 2015).

Regarding **RQ3**, cultural aspects like partner preferences and relationship expectations predict victimization and perpetration of dating violence (TDV) (González-Méndez et al., 2017). Extrinsic preferences, tied to material, social, and status values, are positively associated with TDV in both Spaniards and Moroccans, as relationships based on external traits often foster power dynamics and control. Intrinsic preferences, linked to emotional values, also correlate with victimization but show a negative association with perpetration among Spaniards. This suggests that intrinsic preferences can reduce violence in individualistic contexts where fragile bonds and insecurity prevail (Seddig & Davidov, 2018).

Relationship expectations show differing effects. In Spaniards, marriage and family stability act as protective factors against TDV, reflecting the cultural emphasis on equality and commitment. For Moroccans, these expectations are less protective, while liberal values like “having a good time” and freedom to have multiple partners increase TDV risks in traditionally conservative groups.

In both Spaniards and Moroccans, family acceptance and personal freedom within the relationship act as protective factors. Social and family support reinforces norms of respect and reduces tensions that can lead to violence (Doiucette et al., 2021), while perceived freedom within the couple seems to reduce the need to exert control over the other, thus decreasing the likelihood of perpetrating TDV.

These findings partially confirm H4, as extrinsic preferences (e.g., beauty, sex, status) and traditional expectations (e.g., marriage, family) predict violence, especially among Moroccan men. This aligns with earlier research linking extrinsic values to violence (Contrera & Cano, 2016).

Conclusions

This research contributes to the delimitation of partner preferences, dating expectations, and their potential relationship, preventive or potentiating, with teen dating violence. The study shows that there are patterns or affective worlds that differentiate preferences and/or expectations that vary according to gender and origin. Likewise, these preferences and expectations have a predictive capacity for violence. These findings suggest the need to delve deeper into affective cultures and the meaning of couple choices in each cultural context to adapt educational and preventive programs to them. The cultural adaptation of programs to promote healthy relationships in

adolescence and prevent violence remains a process that requires an analysis of the cultural aspects that affect young people of immigrant and native origin in the Spanish context.

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