



The European Journal of Psychology Applied to Legal Context

www.elsevier.es/ejpal



The Intimate Partner Violence Responsibility Attribution Scale (IPVRAS)

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ARTICLE INFORMATION

Manuscript received: 1/07/2013

Revision received: 8/10/2013

Accepted: 11/10/2013

Key words:

Attribution of responsibility
Batterer intervention programs
Intimate partner violence
Responsibility attribution scale
Structural equation modeling

ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to present a psychometrically sound instrument to assess intimate partner violence offenders' responsibility attributions: the Intimate Partner Violence Responsibility Attribution Scale. The scale was administrated to 423 adult male intimate partner violence offenders court-mandated to a community-based intervention program. A three factor structure (responsibility attribution to the legal system, responsibility attribution to the victim, and responsibility attribution to the offender personal context) was supported using confirmatory factor analysis. Reliability of the scales in this study was estimated using Cronbach's alpha, ρ and greatest lower bound. The Intimate Partner Violence Responsibility Attribution Scale correlated in theoretically expected ways with variables used to assess construct validity (system blaming, problems with partner, and responsibility assumption) and with variables used to assess criterion-related validity (satisfaction with legal system, victim-blaming attitudes, alcohol consumption, hostile sexism, stressful life events, social desirability, impulsivity and household income). Results support the validity and reliability of the Intimate Partner Violence Responsibility Attribution Scale.

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Escala de Atribución de Responsabilidad en Violencia en las Relaciones de Pareja

RESUMEN

El objetivo de este estudio es presentar un instrumento psicométricamente adecuado para evaluar las atribuciones de responsabilidad de hombres condenados por violencia contra la mujer en las relaciones de pareja: la Escala de Atribución de Responsabilidad en Violencia en las Relaciones de Pareja. La escala se administró a 423 hombres condenados por violencia contra la mujer en las relaciones de pareja y remitidos a un programa de intervención en medio comunitario. Tres factores teóricos (atribución de responsabilidad al sistema legal, atribución de responsabilidad a la víctima y atribución de responsabilidad al contexto personal del agresor) fueron contrastados empíricamente mediante un análisis factorial confirmatorio. La fiabilidad de la escala se estimó utilizando los estadísticos alpha de Cronbach, ρ y greatest lower bound. Los factores de la Escala de Atribución de Responsabilidad en Violencia en las Relaciones de Pareja correlacionaron en el sentido esperado teóricamente con las variables utilizadas para evaluar la validez de constructo (culpabilización del sistema, problemas con la pareja, y asunción de responsabilidad) y con las variables utilizadas para evaluar la validez de criterio (satisfacción con el sistema legal, actitudes de culpabilización de la víctima, consumo de alcohol, sexismo hostil, eventos vitales estresantes, deseabilidad social, impulsividad e ingresos en el hogar). Los resultados confirman la validez y fiabilidad de la Escala de Atribución de Responsabilidad en Violencia en las Relaciones de Pareja.

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Palabras clave:

Atribución de responsabilidad
Programas de intervención con
maltratadores
Violencia en las relaciones de pareja
Escala de atribución de responsabilidad
Modelo de ecuaciones estructurales

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A characteristic frequently shared by intimate partner violence against women (IPVAW) offenders is their lack of responsibility assumption (Heckert & Gondolf, 2000; Henning & Holdford, 2006; Henning, Jones, & Holdford, 2005). Responsibility attributions characterized by denial of personal responsibility, victim blaming or other external attributions are common among IPVAW offenders (Barnett, Martínez, & Bluestein, 1995; Eckhardt & Dye, 2000; Holtworth-Munroe & Hutchinson, 1993; Lila, Gracia, & Herrero, 2012; Scott & Strauss, 2007). IPVAW offenders often use strategies to minimize and justify their behavior (Heckert & Gondolf, 2000). These strategies include usually external attributions such as blaming their partner's personality or behavior, arguing "self-defense", or justifying their acts as the result of economic and occupational difficulties (Dutton, 1986; Hamberger, 1997).

Research has linked offenders' responsibility attribution styles to a number of relevant IPVAW outcomes. For example, a number of studies show that IPVAW offenders tend to view their partners as critical and malicious, are more likely to accept low-level violence in relationships and minimize its consequences, and are more likely to blame their partners for any arising problems and conflicts (Cauffman, Feldman, Jensen, & Arnett, 2000; Dutton & Starzomski, 1997; Eckhart, Barbour, & Davison, 1998; Ehrensaft & Vivian, 1999; Schweinle, Ickes, & Bernstein, 2002; Scott & Straus, 2007; Tonizzo, Howells, Day, Reidpath, & Froyland, 2000).

Of particular importance, given its potential practical implications, is the link between IPVAW offenders' responsibility attributions characterized by denial of personal responsibility, victim blaming and the risk of recidivism (Henning et al., 2005). Numerous batterer intervention programs assume that offenders who deny their responsibility will have a high probability to continue abusing their partners (Healey, Smith, & O'Sullivan, 1998; Kropp, Hart, Webster, & Eaves, 1995; Pence & Paymar, 1993). However, the limited research available on the relationship between recidivism and offenders' responsibility assumption provides mixed and inconsistent results (Grann & Wedin, 2002; Hanson & Wallace-Capretta, 2000; Henning & Holdford, 2006; Kropp et al., 1995). Clearly more research is needed to provide more conclusive evidence on this relationship. In this regard, a better understanding of the link between IPVAW offenders' responsibility attributions and important outcomes such as the risk of recidivism would also benefit from the availability of psychometrically sound measures tapping both internal and external attributions of blame.

Measuring IPVAW offenders' responsibility attributions

Professionals often consider IPVAW offenders' responsibility attributions as part of their risk of recidivism assessment in batterer interventions programs. A typical example is the Spousal Assault Risk Assessment Guide (Kropp et al., 1995). However this is a subjective approach based in a single item (i.e., "extreme minimization or denial of spousal assault history") that is extorted by the program staff, and provides limited information about offenders' responsibility attributions. More recently, however, a number of self-report measures on blame attribution in cases of partner violence have been developed. Two of these scales have been developed using university students or community-based samples, and three of them were developed based on IPVAW offenders' responses. Thus, Scott and Straus (2007) assessed variables linked to the attribution of responsibility among a small sample ($N = 139$) of university dating partners (denial of personal contribution to relationships difficulties, blaming of partner for negative affect and experiences, blaming of partner for difficulties). Yun and Vonk (2011) using a community-based sample ($N = 527$) also developed a scale tapping the responsibility attribution for violent behavior toward the intimate partner which included partner blame, and distal blame.

Regarding instruments tapping responsibility attribution based on IPVAW offenders' responses, Henning and Holdford (2006) constructed a measure of attribution of blame composed of two scales (self-blame and victim-blame) based on a large sample of mostly African-American offenders, although they noted some limitations regarding its validity. In another study, Levesque, Velicer, Castle, and Greene (2008) included system blaming, problems with partners, and social justification as measures of processes of resistance to change among IPVAW offenders in treatment. Finally, in a cultural context other than the Anglo-Saxon, where the above studies were conducted, Lila, Herrero and Gracia (2008) developed an Attribution of Responsibility Scale based on the responses of a sample of Spanish IPVAW offenders participating in a batterer intervention program. This scale is composed of three factors: victim-blaming (that assesses the degree to which the offender put the blame of having been convicted of IPVAW on personal characteristics of the victim), self-defense (that evaluates the degree to which the offender attributes his violent behavior to an act of self-defense), and self-attribution of blame (the degree to which the offender assume that his personal characteristics or behaviors are the reason why he is convicted for IPVAW). Although this scale has been used in several studies (Catalá, Lila, & Oliver, 2013; Conchell, Catalá, & Lila, 2012; Lila et al., 2012; Pérez, Giménez-Salinas, & de Juan, 2013), its exploratory nature, and the small sample size used in its development limits its generalizability.

The present study

The aim of this study is to present a psychometrically sound instrument to assess IPVAW offenders' responsibility attributions: the Intimate Partner Violence Responsibility Attribution Scale (IPVRAS). The specific objectives of this study are: (1) To test the IPVRAS factorial validity. According to classical theories of causal attribution (Kelly & Michela, 1980), there are three sources where the cause of events can be located: the person, the stimulus, and the situation. Therefore we also expect a factorial structure reflecting three different sources where IPVAW offenders may locate the cause of the events for which they were convicted: the person (i.e., the offender), the stimulus (i.e., the victim) and the situation (i.e., the legal system). (2) To test the reliability of the scale, using both traditional methods (Cronbach's alpha) and those usually calculated in conjunction with structural equation modeling. (3) To test the construct validity of the scale we will use three measures (one for each of the expected causal source). For responsibility attribution to the legal system and the victim, we will use the system blaming and problems with partner subscales from the Processes of Resistance Scale (Levesque et al., 2008). For attribution of causality to the offender, an indicator of responsibility assumption has been created. (4) To test the IPVRAS criterion-related validity, we will use several measures of variables that theoretically are expected to be related to each of the sources of causal attribution assessed in this scale. We expect that responsibility attribution to the legal system will be inversely related to the satisfaction with the legal system (Guzik, 2008). In relation to the responsibility attribution to the victim, we expect it to be positively related to general attitudes of victim blaming in cases of domestic violence (Klein, Campbell, Soler, & Ghez, 1997; Gracia, Herrero, Lila, & Fuente, 2009) and to sexist attitudes (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Glick, Sakalli-Ugurlu, Ferreira, & de Souza, 2002; Lila et al., 2012). We expect that participants with higher scores on sexism and general victim-blaming attitudes in cases of domestic violence will show a greater tendency to blame his partner for his conviction. Finally, in relation to the responsibility attribution to the offender personal context, we expect that this type of attribution will be positive related to factors traditionally linked to IPVAW offenders, such as abusive alcohol consumption, accumulation of stressful life events, impulsivity, and lower income (Caetano, Field,

Ramisetty-Mikler, & McGrath, 2005; Catalá-Miñana, Lila, Conchell, Romero-Martínez, & Moya-Albiol, 2013; Capaldi, Knoble, Shortt, & Kim, 2012; Kantor y Strauss, 1987; MacKillop, Mattson, MacKillop, Castelda y Donovan, 2007), and inversely related to social desirability (Saunders, 1991; Scott & Strauss, 2007; Sugarman & Hotaling, 1997). Participants with higher scores on alcohol consumption, accumulation of stressful life events, impulsivity, economic difficulties, and low social desirability are expected to show higher scores in responsibility attribution to personal factors.

Method

Participants

The sample consisted of 423 men who were convicted for IPVAV and court-mandated to the community *Contexto* Program, a batterer intervention program conducted in the University of Valencia (Lila, Oliver, Galiana, & Gracia, 2013). These offenders had been sentenced to less than two years in prison and had no previous criminal record. Under these conditions, batterers may choose to serve the sentence in a community intervention program as a substitution to prison mandate. The criteria for inclusion in this study were: (a) not having a serious mental disorder, (b) not having a serious addiction to alcohol or other substances, and (c) signing an informed consent form. They were informed about the nature and purpose of the research, and were told that neither participation nor refusal would affect their legal situation. Anonymity was ensured. Trained programme staff administered the instruments, and items were read out loud to those participants with reading and writing difficulties. Participant's age ranged from 18 to 78 years. 8.8% had no schooling, 45.1% had completed primary or elementary studies, 36.3% had completed high school or vocational training and 9.8% had college degrees. 31.8% were single, 26.5% married or in union, 22.7% divorced, 18.2% separated, and 0.8% widowed.

Instruments

Intimate Partner Violence Responsibility Attribution Scale (IPVRAS). Based on a previous scale assessing IPVAV offenders' attribution of responsibility (Lila et al., 2008), the expert knowledge of professionals conducting batterer intervention programs, and the above review on responsibility attribution measurements, a 12-item scale was constructed with the aim of assessing where the offender places the cause of being convicted for IPVAV. This scale was developed to be self-administered and all items were framed within the following presentation: "you are in a court-mandated intimate partner violence offender intervention program because you were convicted for intimate partner violence against women". It comprises three dimensions theoretically relevant corresponding to three possible sources of causality: Responsibility attribution to the legal system, responsibility attribution to the victim, and responsibility attribution to the offender personal context, all of them composed by four items. A five-point response scale ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) was used. (See the Appendix for the English and Spanish versions of the scale).

System blaming and problems with partner subscales from Processes of Resistance Scale (Levesque et al., 2008). Two 5-item subscales measuring the degree to which one belief that the criminal justice system treats men unfairly in domestic violence cases (system blaming, $\alpha = .73$ at this study), and blames the partner for the violence (problems with partner, $\alpha = .70$ at this study). Both are answered in a 5-point Likert-type scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*very often*).

Responsibility assumption. To assess their responsibility assumption, participants were asked to indicate, in connection with their own situation of conviction for IPVAV, the extent to which they agree with the following statement: "I am the only one responsible

for the events that put me in this situation". Subjects answered in a five-point response scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*).

Satisfaction with the legal system. Participants were asked to indicate their agreement with the following question: "What is your confidence in the legal system (laws, judges, etc.)?" Participants responded in a 10-point response scale ranging from 1 (*No confidence at all*) to 10 (*I fully trust*).

Victim-blaming attitudes. The tendency to blame the woman victim of intimate partner violence was measured adapting the following question from the Eurobarometer European and their views on domestic violence against women (European Commission, 1999; Gracia et al., 2009): "A cause of domestic violence against women is the provocative behavior of women". Category responses ranged from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 5 (*completely agree*).

Hostile Sexism Scale from the *Ambivalent Sexism Inventory* (Glick & Fiske, 1996; Spanish adaptation by Expósito, Moya, & Glick, 1998). An 11-item scale that evaluates an antagonistic attitude towards women, who are often viewed as inferior and trying to control men. Participants responded to the inventory at a 6-point Likert-type scale ranged from 0 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Alpha was .88 in this study.

Alcohol Use Disorders Identification Test (Babor & Grant, 1989). This is a 10-item screening test on alcohol consumption that detects harmful and hazardous alcohol consumption, and possible dependence. Five response options of frequency were provided to answer to the items (i.e., 0 = *never*, 1 = *less than once per month*, 2 = *once per month*, 3 = *once per week*, 4 = *daily or almost daily*). Alpha obtained in this study .79.

Stressful Life Events Inventory (Gracia & Herrero, 2004). This inventory includes 33 stressful life events, and measures the amount of unwanted events experienced during the last six months. The list of stressful life events includes conflicts and problems in areas such as work/school, home, love and marriage, family, health, community, finances, and legal. There are two response options; 0 (*absence*); 1 (*presence*). Alpha for this scale in the present study was .70.

Plutchik Impulsivity Scale (Plutchik & Van Praag, 1989). This 15-item scale measures impulsivity as an immediate reaction disregarding any behavior consequences. It is responded in a 4-point Likert-type scale ranged from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*almost always*). Alpha for the participants in this study was .72.

Household income. Participants were asked to calculate their annual household income. Their responses were coded from 1 (*less than 1,800€*) to 12 (*more than 120,000€*).

Data Analyses

Factorial validity of the 12-item IPVRAS was assessed via structural equation models (SEM), using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). The model was estimated in EQS 6.1. Given the five point Likert scale, polychoric correlations and corrected (robust) statistics were used to estimate the model. This is the recommended procedure in the literature (Finney & DiStefano, 2006). Goodness-of-fit was assessed via several robust fit indexes. Specifically, (a) χ^2 statistic with the Satorra-Bentler correction (Kline, 1998; Ullman, 1996); (b) two robust indices that compare with a null model, the Normed Fit Index (NFI) that assumes a central chi-square distribution, and the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) that assumes a non-central chi-square distribution, with cut-off criteria of .90 or higher (ideally over .95; Hu & Bentler, 1999) as indicative of adequate fit; (c) the McDonald Fit Index (MFI), an absolute index that do not compare the model to any other model, and with the same cut-off criteria already presented; and (d) the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA; Steiger & Lind, 1980) of .05 or lower. The analytical fit of the model was also scrutinized, considering how large loadings were, if there were salient areas of strains in the solution (large modification

indices), and finally having into accounts the interpretability of parameter estimates.

Analyses also included internal consistency, construct validity, and criterion validity. Reliability of the scales in this study was estimated using Cronbach's alpha, ρ and the *greatest lower bound* (glb). Cronbach's coefficient alpha is the most widely used estimator of the reliability of tests and scales. However, it has been criticized as being only completely appropriate with essentially tau-equivalent items (and tests), and being a lower bound for the true reliability (Raykov, 2004). More explicitly, a tau-equivalent test assumes all items measure the same latent variable, on the same scale, with the same degree of precision, with all true scores being equal (Graham, 2006; Sijtsma, 2009). When tau-equivalence does not hold, alpha will over- or underestimate (more often the latter) the population value. Two increasing popular alternative to alpha coefficient are ρ and glb, which are usually calculated in conjunction with structural equation modeling (Graham, 2006) and, accordingly, were calculated. Construct validity was studied using correlations with the corresponding dimensions of the Processes of Resistance Scale, system blaming and problems with partner, and with an indicator of responsibility assumption. Finally, criterion validity was obtained relating responsibility attribution to the legal system with satisfaction with the legal system; responsibility attribution to the victim with victim-blaming attitudes and with hostile sexism; and responsibility attribution to the offender personal context with alcohol consumption, stressful life events, impulsivity, household income, and social desirability.

Results

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis was specified, estimated and evaluated with an a priori three-factor model structure. Overall fit indices mainly supported this structure of the scale: $\chi^2(51) = 120.96$, $p < .01$, NFI = .910, CFI = .945, GFI = .910, MFI = .912 and RMSEA = .060. Altogether, the indexes assessed the model as an adequate representation of the observed data. In order to report overall fit information, a detailed examination of the factor loadings gave an idea of the analytical fit of the model. All indicators significantly loaded ($p < .01$) in the hypothesized factor, giving support to the adequacy of the three-factor model. As shown in Figure 1, the standardized factor loadings for the responsibility attribution to the legal system factor were within a minimum of .394 (item 9, "I am here because nowadays *intimate partner violence* is a label applied to trivial things") and a maximum of .832 (item 7, "The reason why I am here is because the Law gets involved in private matters"). In the case of the responsibility attribution to the victim factor, minimum factor loading was .426 (item 11, "I am here because I defended myself from my partner's aggressions"), and the maximum was .737 (item 12, "I am here because of the lies and exaggerations of my partner"). Finally, the factor responsibility attribution to the offender personal context had a minimum factor loading of .569 (item 6, "Economic or employment problems are the reasons why I am in this situation"), and a maximum of .692 (item 10, "My character -aggressiveness, impulsivity, lack of control, nervousness, psychological problems, etc.- is the reason why I am in this situation"). All factor loadings were above the values considered indicative of an adequate consistency with the a priori factor.

Internal consistency

Cronbach's alphas were computed and had a value of .70 for the responsibility attribution to legal system dimension, .62 for the responsibility attribution to the victim dimension, and .56 for the responsibility attribution to the offender personal context dimension.

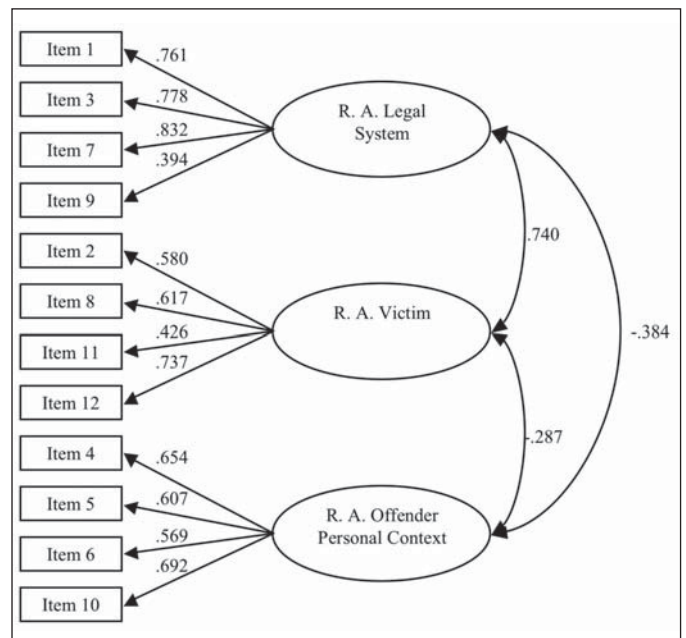


Figure 1. Standardized factor loadings for the IPVRAS structural equations model. Note. For the sake of clarity, errors are not shown. All factor loadings were statistically significant.

Even though these results do not seem completely appropriate, several indices support the internal consistency of the scale. ρ was also estimated and was .797 for responsibility attribution to the legal system, .702 for responsibility attribution to the victim, and .727 for responsibility attribution to the offender personal context. Finally, responsibility attribution to the legal system glb was .830, responsibility attribution to the victim was .717, and responsibility attribution to the offender's personal context was .762. Descriptive statistics, item homogeneity, and alpha if-item-deleted are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Means, standard deviations, item homogeneity, alpha if item deleted, for the items of the Intimate Partner Violence Responsibility Attribution Scale

Factors and items	Mean	SD	Item homogeneity	Alpha if item deleted
<i>Responsibility Attribution to the Legal System</i>				
Item 1	3.75	1.54	.537	.590
Item 3	3.36	1.69	.583	.553
Item 7	3.48	1.70	.517	.598
Item 9	3.10	1.69	.286	.741
<i>Responsibility Attribution to the Victim</i>				
Item 2	3.63	1.55	.398	.528
Item 8	3.09	1.68	.455	.481
Item 11	2.47	1.68	.327	.581
Item 12	3.61	1.67	.370	.548
<i>Responsibility Attribution to the Offender Personal Context</i>				
Item 4	1.51	1.12	.329	.481
Item 5	1.82	1.45	.308	.495
Item 6	1.81	1.37	.323	.480
Item 10	2.00	1.42	.374	.434

Construct validity

Construct validity was assessed, first, by correlating two IPVRAS dimensions with their correspondent Processes of Resistance Scale dimensions. The correlation between responsibility attribution to the legal system and system blaming was .374 ($p < .01$), and the relationship between responsibility attribution to the victim and problems with partner was .553 ($p < .01$). And second, responsibility attribution to the offender personal context was related with an indicator of responsibility assumption, with a correlation of .288 ($p < .01$).

Criterion-related validity

External evidence of the scale was obtained by correlating several of the constructs that have been related with responsibility attribution in multiple studies on intimate partner violence. Particularly, responsibility attribution was related to satisfaction with the legal system, hostile sexism, stressful life events, victim blaming attitudes, social desirability, abusive alcohol consumption, impulsivity, and household income, as detailed in the previous section. Responsibility attribution to the legal system correlated $-.302$ ($p < .01$) with satisfaction with the legal system. Responsibility attribution to the victim correlated $.252$ ($p < .01$) with hostile sexism and $.237$ ($p < .01$) with victim blaming attitudes. Responsibility attribution to the offender's personal context correlated $.301$ ($p < .01$) with stressful life events; $-.274$ ($p < .01$) with social desirability; $.379$ ($p < .01$) with abusive alcohol consumption; $.340$ ($p < .01$) with impulsivity; and $-.112$ ($p < .05$) with household income. All correlations were in the expected direction.

Discussion

Intimate partner violence offender's attributions of responsibility are considered a major issue in batterer intervention programs central in reducing the risk of re-offense and increasing the responsibility assumption (Austin & Dankwort, 1999; Lila et al., 2012; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Scott & Straus, 2007). Generally, in batterer intervention programs IPVAV offenders are encouraged to face up the consequences of their own behavior, accept their responsibility for the harm they have done, and abandon the justifications and rationalizations justifying their behavior (Carbajosa & Boira, 2013; Davis & Taylor, 1999; Gondolf, 2002; Lila, 2013; Pence & Paymar, 1993; Yun & Vonk, 2011). Nevertheless, although there seems to be an agreement on the importance of this issue in the intervention with IPVAV offenders, there are only a small number of validated measures with supportive empirical evidence (Henning & Holdford, 2006; Levesque et al., 2008; Lila et al., 2008; Scott & Straus, 2007; Yun & Vonk, 2011).

The aim of this study was to develop and validate an instrument designed to assess IPVAV offenders' responsibility attributions about why they have been convicted for: the Intimate Partner Violence Responsibility Attribution Scale (IPVRAS). Factorial validity, internal consistency, construct and criterion-related validity of the 12-item scale were reasonably established in a sample of 423 offenders.

As regards factorial validity, a three factor CFA was estimated. This factor structure was proposed a priori, consistent with the three possible causality sources described by classical attribution theories (Kelly & Michela, 1980), and previous scientific literature on IPVAV offenders' responsibility attribution (Henning & Holdford, 2006; Lila et al., 2012; Scott & Strauss, 2007). Robust fit indexes, taken together, showed adequate fit to the data, confirming the three underlying factors of the twelve items in the scale.

The first factor assessed offenders' responsibility attribution to law or legal context, and was labeled responsibility attribution to the

legal system (e.g., "The reason why I am here is that the Law gets involved in private matters"; "An unfair legal system (laws, judges, etc.) is the reason why I am in this situation"). Often, IPVAV offenders consider that the law and their agents are overreaching and worrying about things wrongly labeled as crime or offense (Cattlet, Toews, & Walilko, 2010), and tend to believe that the unfairness of the system explains their arrest. This factor also seems to include the offender's minimizations of his violent behavior, as in Levesque et al. (2008) system blaming scale.

The second factor, the one related to stimulus (i.e., the woman victim), was labeled responsibility attribution to the victim (e.g., "My partner's behavior and way of treating me are the main reasons of being in this situation"; "I am here because of the lies and exaggerations of my partner"). This type of attribution of blame is not only common to among IPVAV offenders (Austin & Dankwort, 1999; Lila et al., 2012; Lila, Gracia, & Murgui, 2013; Scott & Strauss, 2007). For example research shows that victim-blaming attributions regarding domestic violence are still widespread both among the general population (Gracia & Herrero, 2006; Gracia, García, & Lila, 2009; West & Wandrei, 2002; Worden y Carlson, 2002), as well as among professionals (Finn & Stalans, 1995; Gracia, García, & Lila, 2008, 2011; Saunders & Size, 1986). Also, as noted Capezza and Arriaga (2008), this is a common attribution of blame in other types of crime such as rape (Whatley, 2005), or robbery (e.g., Howard, 1984), and other situations like natural disasters such as hurricanes (Napier, Mandisodza, Andersen, & Jost, 2006).

The third factor was labeled responsibility attribution to the offender's personal context (e.g., "Alcohol or substance abuse is the reason why I am in this situation"; "Economic or employment problems are the reasons why I am in this situation"). Some of the most common self-justifications directly related to offender's own behavior are included in this factor; jealousy (Dobash, Dobash, Cavanagh, & Medina-Ariza, 2007; Edin, Lalos, Högberg, & Dahlgren, 2008; Gilchrist, 2009), alcohol or other substance abuse (Catalá-Miñana et al., 2013; Giancola et al., 2009; Stuart, O'Farrell, & Temple, 2009), economic or employment problems (Catlett et al., 2010; Henning & Holdford, 2006), and personality traits as impulsivity or lack of control (Caetano, Vaeth, Ramisetty-Mikler, 2008; Foran & O'Leary, 2008; Hamberger & Hastings, 1991).

Internal consistency by confirmatory analyses adequate for congeneric indicators was always above the .7 value.

In relation to the IPVRAS construct validity, both responsibility attribution to the legal system and responsibility attribution to the victim were adequately correlated with the corresponding dimensions of the Processes of Resistance Scale (Levesque et al., 2008), system blaming (i.e., "believing that the criminal justice system treats men unfairly in domestic violence cases and that women abuse the laws"; p. 165) and problems with partner (i.e., "blaming the partner for the violence, or focusing on the partner's difficult behavior"; p. 165). Correlation between responsibility attribution to the offender personal context and the indicator of responsibility assumption (i.e., the agreement with the sentence "I am the only one responsible for the events that put me in this situation") was slightly low. This result is not entirely surprising considering that the offender recognition of the role of their own personal circumstances (substance abuse, or jealousy) in the violence, does not necessarily means that for them these circumstances were the only involved or that they were the only and ultimate responsible for the violence. Despite recognizing these factors they could still blame the victim for the violence (Scott & Strauss, 2007).

Criterion-related validity has been tested with a range of constructs related with responsibility attribution in intimate partner violence literature. As expected, responsibility attribution to legal system was inversely correlated with satisfaction with the legal system. A large proportion of IPVAV offenders participating in

community-based intervention programs do not consider the behavior which cause their conviction to be a crime and define their own behavior in intimate relationships as “normal” or “acceptable” (Cattlet et al., 2010; Guzik, 2008; Scott & Strauss). This would explain why they consider their conviction and the law unfair; since, in their opinion, they punish a “normal” male behavior (see Cattlet et al., 2010, for a qualitative analysis). Responsibility attribution to the victim correlated with hostile sexism and victim blaming attitudes. Hostile sexism is defined as a subject’s antagonistic attitude toward women by viewing them as inferior beings who try to control men (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Sexism, in general terms, has been related to attitudes that legitimize violence against women, which may explain the link between hostile sexism and responsibility attribution to the victim (Glick, Sakalli-Ugurlu, Ferreira, & de Souza, 2002; Herrera, Expósito & Moya, 2012; Lila, Gracia, & García, 2013). As expected, we also found that responsibility attribution to the victim was closely related to victim-blaming attitudes (Gracia & Tomás, in press; West & Wandrei, 2002). Finally, responsibility attribution to the offender personal context was positively correlated with stressful life events, abusive alcohol consumption, and impulsivity; and inversely correlated with social desirability and household income. Criminological research and theory has found that stressful life events, abusive alcohol consumption, impulsivity, and low income are significant factors explaining violence (Agnew, 1992; Caetano et al., 2008; Capaldi et al., 2012; Giancola et al., 2009; Lila et al., 2013).

This study has also some limitations. The participants were men condemned less than two years in prison and they had no previous criminal records. The use of the IPVRS should be made with cautious before it can be replicated with other intimate partner violence offender populations. Also, the observed values on variables of the study corresponded to the first assessment session of a court mandated batterer intervention program in the community. Thus, it is unclear whether these attributions were present when the episode happened. Alternatively, these attributions could have changed during the time-lag between court’s sentence and the assessment session at the beginning of the program.

Another potential limitation is that in our study we did not take into account underlying variables that could be explaining the responsibility attributions. In this regard, White and Gondolf (2000) had shown a preponderance of narcissistic and antisocial tendencies among batterers using the psychological profiles generated by the Millon Clinical Multiaxial Inventory (MCMI-III) (Millon, 1994). A research review on violent offenders in general showed that inflated expectations, “self-righteousness”, and threatened egotism characterized the vast majority of these men (Baumeister, Smart, & Boden, 1996). According to Gondolf (2007), many violent people, especially those with antisocial and narcissistic tendencies, do not feel much guilt or personal responsibility for their violent behavior. They are likely to blame other individuals or outward circumstances. In this regard, according to Henning and Holdford (2006) it is important to assess these dispositional variables. Furthermore, Paulhus (1984) makes a distinction between response biases for the purpose of impression management as opposed to self-deception. In the case of impression management there is conscious manipulation of responses in order to appear more socially conforming. This can be originated by situational pressures or shame about violent behavior. In the case of self-deception, individuals actually believe their positive self-reports to be accurate. These individuals often have an inflated self-esteem and tend to blame others for their behavior and to believe that the severity of their actions has been exaggerated. More research is needed to disentangle the effects of dispositional and situational factors on attribution of responsibility and minimization (Sugarman & Hotaling, 1997).

Beyond these potential limitations, the scale presented here might be useful to identify priority areas of intervention in convicted

males for domestic violence against women. IPVRS may allow researchers and professionals to identify the main offender’s justifications and responsibility attributions and to plan and implement strategies to increase the intervention efficacy.

Conflict of interest

The authors of this article declare no conflicts of interest.

Acknowledgements

This research was supported by the Spanish Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (PSI2011-25434 and PSI2010-21334), and was conducted in collaboration with Home Office Prison Administration (Instituciones Penitenciarias, Ministerio del Interior). Laura Galiana and Alba Catalá have a postgraduate grant (VCL/Campus/Atracció de Talent –University of Valencia- and FPI/BES-2009-014139 –Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad).

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Appendix

English (roman) and Spanish (italics) versions of the IPVVRAS.

Item no.	Domain	Item content
1	L	I am here because of an injustice. Me encuentro aquí por una injusticia.
2	V	My partner's behavior and way of treating me are the main reasons of being in this situation. La conducta y la forma de tratarme de mi pareja son los principales responsables de que me encuentre en esta situación.
3	L	An unfair legal system (laws, judges, etc.) is the reason why I am in this situation. Un sistema legal injusto (leyes, jueces, etc.) es el responsable de que me encuentre en esta situación.
4	O	I am in this situation because of my jealousy. Mis celos son la causa de que me encuentre en esta situación.
5	O	Alcohol or substance abuse is the reason why I am in this situation. La bebida o uso de otras drogas es la causa de que me encuentre en esta situación.
6	O	Economic or employment problems are the reasons why I am in this situation. Los problemas económicos o laborales son los responsables de que me encuentre en esta situación.
7	L	The reason why I am here is because the Law gets involved in private matters. La causa de que esté aquí es que la ley se mete en asuntos que son privados.
8	V	The aggressive character, lack of control, nervousness or psychological problems of my partner are the reasons why I am in this situation. <i>El carácter agresivo, falta de control, nerviosismo o problemas psicológicos de mi pareja es la causa de que me encuentre en esta situación.</i>
9	L	I am here because nowadays “domestic violence” is a label applied to trivial things. La causa de que esté aquí es que se le llama violencia contra la pareja a cualquier cosa.
10	O	My character (aggressiveness, impulsivity, lack of control, nervousness, psychological problems, etc.) is the reason why I am in this situation. Mi forma de ser (carácter agresivo, impulsividad, falta de control, nerviosismo, problemas psicológicos, etc.) es la causa de que me encuentre en esta situación.
11	V	I am here because I defended myself from my partner's aggressions. Estoy aquí por haberme defendido de las agresiones de mi pareja.
12	V	I am here because of the lies and exaggerations of my partner. Estoy aquí por las mentiras y exageraciones de mi pareja.

Notes: L = Responsibility attribution to the legal system; V = Responsibility attribution to the victim; O = Responsibility attribution to the offender personal context.