

INTRODUCTION

Emerging Adulthood is a developmental stage that redefines the moment of transition between adolescence and adulthood and encompasses the period from 18 to 29 years of age.

Ambivalent sexism includes hostile and benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 2001). The first is based on prejudiced attitudes or discriminatory behaviors based on the supposed inferiority or difference of women as a group, and the second is a seemingly positive orientation of protection, idealization, and affection towards women, which also serves to justify their subordinate status regarding men.

Romantic attachment: Attachment theory holds that experiences of availability and the quality of the support received from parents in situations of threat or stress together make up a cognitive system (Bowlby, 1969; Hazan & Shaver, 1987) that determines the nature of their behavioral, cognitive and affective response (Fraley & Shaver, 2000). Upon reaching adulthood, these responses are defined in accordance with two dimensions:

- Attachment anxiety: need for closeness and idealized view of romantic love, coupled with fear of abandonment and a negative view of the self (Fraley, Waller, & Brennan., 2000; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007).

- Attachment avoidance: need for self-sufficiency and the perception of others as unreliable (Fraley et al., 2000; Mikulincer & Shaver, 2007). Those who score low in both these dimensions are characterized by being more secure.

METHOD

SAMPLE

1,008 emerging adults

- 755 university students (44.9% men, *Mean age*= 20.69, *SD age*= 2.21, *Range age*= 18-29).

- 253 non-university students (53% men, *Mean age*= 20.57, *SD age*= 2.22, *Range age*= 17-26).

MEASURES

- *Demographic variables:* All participants indicated their age, sex and education level.
- *Sexism:* The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (Glick & Fiske, 1996), validated for the Spanish population by Expósito, Moya, and Glick (1998). Hostile sexism ($\alpha = .91$) and benevolent sexism ($\alpha = .87$).
- *Romantic attachment:* Experience of Close Relationships (Brennan, Clark & Shaver, 1998). Spanish version of the questionnaire (Arbiol, Balluerka & Shaver, 2007). Anxiety dimension ($\alpha = .85$) and avoidance dimension ($\alpha = .82$).

PROCEDURE

To ask permission to contact participants :

- University students: the research team contacted faculty.
- Non-university students: the research team contacted institutions and the management staff and teachers.

All participants were informed of the aim of the study and assurances were given that the survey was both anonymous and confidential. All students participated voluntarily.

The process of filling out the questionnaire lasted approximately 30 minutes.

The study was approved by the University of Sevilla Biomedical Research Ethics Committee.

RESULTS

1. Descriptive analysis

- Differences were found between men and women (table 1):
 - Emerging adult men were more sexist than their female counterparts, in relation to both hostile and benevolent sexism.
 - Emerging adult men also scored higher than women in the attachment avoidance dimension, although no sex differences were observed in the attachment anxiety dimension.
- No differences were found between the **university and non-university** samples:
 - Hostile sexism: $t=.57$; $p=.56$; $d=.03$
 - Benevolent sexism: $t=.92$; $p=.34$; $d=.07$
 - Avoidance: $t=.79$; $p=.43$; $d=.07$
 - Anxiety: $t=-.165$; $p=.10$; $d=-.13$

Table 1. Mean comparisons for men and women

		M	SD	t	Cohen's d
Hostil sexism	Men	2.40	1.12	11.37**	.72
	Women	1.62	1.04		
Benevolent sexism	Men	2.00	1.05	8.13**	.52
	Women	1.48	0.98		
Avoidance attachment	Men	1.72	0.43	2.09*	.14
	Women	1.66	0.43		
Anxiety attachment	Men	2.25	0.56	.44	-.04
	Women	2.26	0.57		

* $p < .05$; ** $p < .001$

2. Correlation analysis

- Men and women: hostile and benevolent sexism correlated positively with each other, and both were positively associated with attachment anxiety.
- Men: hostile sexism was positively associated with attachment avoidance

Table 2. Correlations between all study variables for men and women separately

	2		3		4	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
1. Hostile sexism	.56**	.64**	.13**	.05	.29**	.27**
2. Benevolent sexism			.06	.07	.32**	.31**
3. Attach. Avoidance					.04	-.00
4. Attach. anxiety						

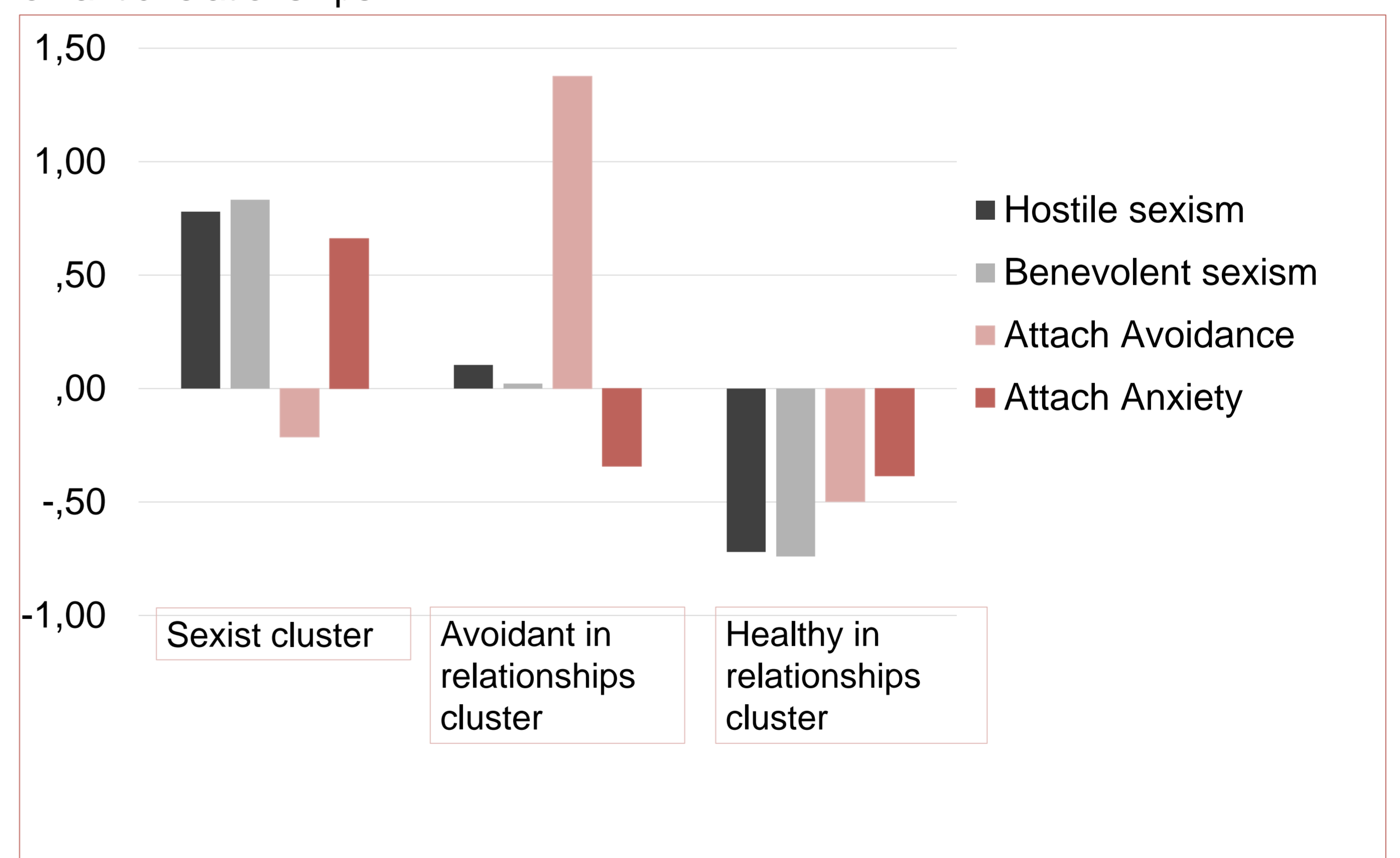
** $p < .01$

3. Cluster analysis

Three clusters have been found (figure 1):

- Sexist cluster: $n=325$ and 36.68 % of the sample.
- Avoidant in relationships cluster: $n=184$ and 20.77% of the sample.
- Healthy in relationships cluster: $n=377$; 42.55% of the sample.

Figure 1. Attachment and Sexism clusters: means of standardized scores for hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, attachment anxiety and attachment avoidance in romantic relationships



CONCLUSIONS

Emerging adulthood is a key stage in the construction of stable romantic relationships. The findings presented here suggest that these romantic relationships should be built on two foundational pillars: secure relationship attachment models based on trust in oneself and others, and non-sexist values which seek to foster gender equality. Fostering feelings of security and trust in themselves and others, as well endorsing egalitarian values, may be key developmental issues to address in the educational and social contexts in which emerging adults navigate their transition to adulthood.