Author’s response to reviews

Title: Relationship Satisfaction and Interpartner Agreement about Acts of Physical and Psychological Aggression: A Multilevel Analysis

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Author’s response to reviews:

Stefano Comai, PhD (Reviewer 1):

The manuscript by José Luis Graña et al. examines within heterosexual couples the interpartner agreement concerning physical and psychological aggression and the impact of relationship satisfaction. The authors found low to moderate levels of agreement on physical and psychological aggression. In women but not in men, relationship satisfaction showed a significant influence on the level of agreement concerning only acts of psychological aggression. No relationship with physical aggression was found. These results indicate psychological rather than physical aggression plays a more relevant role in women’s relationship satisfaction. The introduction is somehow long but more importantly is completely missing of the clear aim of this work.

- Why was this work undertaken? This aspect is important to understand the different hypotheses that the authors wanted to examine.

Background Section Line 10 Page 5: “Given the importance of the phenomenon of gender-based violence in Spanish society, this study aimed to determine the role played by the couple's satisfaction with their relationship in partner violence and possible interventions derived from the results”.

- Missing data were replaced through EM procedures. Specific information of the amount of missing data should be indicated.
Procedure Section Line 9 Page 10: We attach the requested information but we need to confirm if it's necessary to include it in the submitt.

Attached file

- I suggest to the authors to revise the results section describing tables 4 and 5 in order to make it easier to the readers. It is quite difficult to have the parallel between what has been described in the results and what has been reported in the two tables.

Data Analysis Section -Correlates of Agreement- Line 21 Page 12: “To obtain the parallel scales for psychological and physical aggression an equivalent proportion of items were selected for each subscale considering the highest and lowest standard deviations. The results obtained will show the average acts of aggression and agreement in the couple and the subscale used will be multiplied by 2”.

- What do you mean with "approached statistical significance" (pag 17, line 16)?

Results Section Line 8 Page 17: This was a translation error; “the result obtained was statistically significant, as shown in Table 4”.

- What is the p value? “The p value is: p <0.001”

- I would also consider concluding the paper summarizing the main findings and future perspectives of this work rather than its limitations.

Discussion Section Line 3 Page 24: “One of the main conclusions of this study was to determine the relationship between satisfaction with the relationship and its influence on reports of psychological aggression in the couple. The results show that, in women, satisfaction with the relationship plays a very important role in the reports of the nature of psychological aggression. For women, being satisfied with the relationship involves underestimating acts of psychological aggression. This result has implications, and it would be advisable to contextualize women's responses to questionnaires about aggression in the couple taking into account the reported level of satisfaction. Thus, if the level of satisfaction is very low, this is compatible with a higher estimation of partner-aggression and, in contrast, if the level of satisfaction is high, the real level of aggression may be underestimated. This relationship has not been found in men, and their reports of aggression appear to be independent of their level of satisfaction. If we extrapolate these community data to the clinical or forensic population, we would need a detailed assessment of both members of the couple to achieve a more objective and accurate picture of the
relationship in those cases where aggression and violence is the reason for demanding couple therapy, separation and divorce suits, in custody cases, or in situations of gender violence”.

- Minor points. Tables 4 and 5. *p < .05. **p < .01 should be removed from the legend since they are apparently not present in the table.

We eliminated the, which had no relation with results of the table

Sharyn Burns (Reviewer 2):

Please include all comments for the authors in this box rather than uploading your report as an attachment. Please only upload as attachments annotated versions of manuscripts, graphs, supporting materials or other aspects of your report which cannot be included in a text format. Please overwrite this text when adding your comments to the authors. This is a well-developed paper. The research provides some interesting discussion, and while it is confirming previous research is important and relevant. It would be useful for the authors to discuss the implications of the results of this study. For example, how can these results be used to help develop interventions to address issues of relationship violence. Given the sample was a population based sample these results provide an opportunities to discuss population level in addition to more targeted strategies.

There are a few points which need clarifying:

- The abstract states: "Conclusions: Psychological aggression plays a more relevant role in women’s relationship satisfaction than physical aggression". Identify in what direction this is - is psychological aggression more concerning, related to greater dissatisfaction etc for women than men?

Page 18 Line 16: …the direction of this effect indicates that “women who were less satisfied with their relationship reported more acts of psychological aggression by their partners than their partners reported, and women who were more satisfied with their relationship reported fewer acts of psychological aggression than their partners reported”

Page 19 Line 12: …the direction of this effect indicates that “women who were more satisfied with their relationship reported committing fewer acts of psychological aggression than their partners reported, and women who were less satisfied reported perpetrating more acts of psychological aggression than their partners reported".
Page 22 Line 8: “Indeed, psychological aggression is a concern in the case of women who are dissatisfied with their relationship because, in these cases, they tend to overestimate, not only the acts of psychological aggression perpetrated by their partners, but also the acts of psychological aggression perpetrated by themselves. However, it is more troubling in the case of women who are satisfied with their relationship because they tend to underestimate not only the acts of psychological aggression perpetrated by their partners but also the psychological aggression they themselves perpetrate”.

- How did the RAs ensure both partners completed the survey? There is no discussion as to whether questionnaires were rejected if both partners did not complete the survey. Given the data were matched I assume this is the case however this should be discussed along with the partner attrition (one partner returning and the other not)

Page 9 Line 15: “The procedure was as follows: a) each research assistant had to collect a quota of 8 couples from the assigned census area, 1/3 of whom could be acquaintances and the rest unknown that had to be approached mainly by telephone calling and asking them if they wanted to participate in this study, and participants were told that they could give their consent by completing the questionnaire and sending it anonymously and independently of their couple to a PO Box”.

- RAs recruited "1/3 of whom could be acquaintances and the rest unknown" - how did the RA's find the unknown participants? How did they assure partners both completed the survey? Was there any bias with recruiting the acquaintances?

The purpose of this research was explained to the participants and, as the questionnaire was anonymous, the consent form was introduced in the first part of the protocol, and participants were told that they could give their consent by completing the questionnaire and sending it anonymously and independently of their couple to a PO Box.

- Page 9, Line 21 The authors state: "to confirm the veracity of the data, a random control of 10 percent of the participants of the study was performed. Please explain how this was achieved.

The unknown were contacted by dialing calling and an interview was concerted with the couple and also by approaching people. This information was provided to the couples that consented to participate in the study.
Limitations page 24, line 10: The second limitation states: Second, given that the study consisted of couples and not individuals, the answers to the questions about the relationship satisfaction and the use of aggressive behaviours may be influenced by the partner's answer or by what the partner expects to hear due to factors such as social desirability, which is an important response bias. In this section the authors suggest partners were given and the surveys independently. How did the RA's match the partners and provide both with the surveys? What was done to reduce social desirability (for example, discussing the importance of honesty etc)

“The purpose of this research was explained to the participants and, as the questionnaire was anonymous, the consent form was introduced in the first part of the protocol, and participants were told that they could give their consent by completing the questionnaire and sending it anonymously and independently of their couple to a PO Box”.

Page 22, line 19 The association with Cognitive Dissonance in this context is good, however it would be useful to describe in a little more detail - are the women who are happy using dissonance to justify and possibly ignore the behaviours? Describe and also show the associations for those who are dissatisfied

Page 23, line 3: “Women who were less satisfied with their couple relationship used dissonance to justify the presence of these aggressive behaviors. Satisfied women used dissonance to ignore and justify the presence of these aggressive behaviors”

Edits: The following sentences are confusing (consider editing):

Page 6, line 6 "such that high relationship satisfaction will be related to reporting less aggression than that reported by the partner, whereas low relationship satisfaction will be related to reporting more aggression than the partner reported."

Page 6, line 5: “People who are satisfied with their couple relationship will tend to report less presence of aggression--their own or their partner's--whereas people who are dissatisfied with their relationship will tend to report a greater presence of acts of Aggression”.

Page 3, Line 7: interjudge agreement (what does this mean)

This refers to the agreement between judges
Neither men's relationship satisfaction was significantly associated with couples' mean or differential reports of male and female perpetrated psychological aggression. What is meant by 'neither men's'

In the case of the men, satisfaction with the relationship was not significantly associated with reports of psychological aggression. The same was observed in couples that reported psychological aggression by the man and the woman, respectively.

Page 20, line 10 Comma should be moved to: of the couples,

We removed the comma from the text

Page 21, line 3 Should this read more male than female ...? "In addition, this report identified more male and female physical aggressive behaviors, and these results are consistent with the observations made in previous research on the dyadic or bidirectional nature of physical aggression [6, 42] and psychological aggression [43]."

Page 21, line 2: “The importance of considering a report of higher aggression by the partner is due because it captures more reports of aggression than individual reports and therefore offers a more accurate view of the prevalence of aggression in the couple. In addition, this report identifies more aggressive behavior in men and women, and these results are consistent with the observations made in previous research on the dyadic or bidirectional nature of physical aggression [6, 42] and psychological aggression [43].

Page 22, line 17 Satisfied - should read satisfied

This was changed in the text.

Page 22, line 18 Should read act (not acts) (or these types of acts)

This was changed in the text.