

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Coercive micromachismo as a form of symbolic violence among Peruvian university students

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ABSTRACT

Coercive micromachismo is a form of symbolic violence that reinforces gender inequalities through subtle and normalized practices. In the university environment, its analysis is relevant given its impact on coexistence, equity and student well-being. The aim of this study was to analyze the presence of coercive micromachismo in Peruvian university students according to sociodemographic variables. A quantitative, basic, non-experimental, cross-sectional, and descriptive level study was conducted; 1000 students from public and private universities in a region of Peru participated, selected by non-probabilistic sampling for convenience, a validated scale was applied for the Peruvian university population; The data were analyzed with descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests. A high presence of coercive micromachismo (56%) was found, significant differences were found ($p < .05$) according to sex, type of university, occupation, area of residence, type of family, area of studies and religion, with higher scores in men, students of public universities, who study and work, reside in rural areas, come from extended families, they study science and/or engineering and profess the Christian religion. Conclusion, coercive micromachismo is highly present in the university population, evidencing that the educational level does not determine its overcoming, due to cultural, family and sociodemographic factors.

Keywords: Coercive micromachismo; symbolic violence; subordination; gender stereotypes; university students

1. Introduction

In the Peruvian university environment, cultural practices persist that reproduce gender inequalities, even in academic contexts oriented towards critical and professional training. One of these manifestations is coercive micromachismo, understood as those subtle and socially accepted behaviors that seek to exert control, limit female autonomy and reinforce roles of subordination to men^[1].

In recent years, literature has broadened the understanding of micromachismo as a form of institutional symbolic violence^[2,3], which manifests itself not only in individual interactions, but also in norms, academic practices, and social structures that reproduce gender hierarchies, even within educational settings that declare themselves inclusive.

In addition, men's behaviors are part of a spectrum of invisible microviolence, which include gestural threats, control of money, monopolization of spaces or resources, imposition of privacy, abusive insistence,

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among the most relevant [4].

From an intersectional perspective [5], coercive micromachismo is configured at the intersection between gender, social class and cultural context, explaining its persistence in universities where students of diverse origins and socioeconomic levels coexist; this vision expands on the classical notion of symbolic violence proposed by Bourdieu 1998, recognizing that educational institutions can reproduce inequalities through apparently neutral practices.

In this sense, these practices, although less visible than explicit violence, have a significant effect on students' psychological well-being, self-esteem, and perception of fairness [6]. In addition, it has been observed that micromachismos are part of daily university life, influencing interpersonal relationships and the normalization of inequality [7].

With respect to the dimensions of coercive micromachismo, they allow us to identify both coercive behaviors and the beliefs that sustain them, on the one hand subordination, includes statements that reflect the acceptance of male authority, dependence on women and the limitation of autonomy in the couple relationship; and on the other, stereotypes, analyze traditional beliefs about gender roles, such as controlling economic aspects or having the final decision on relevant matters [8].

However, recent theoretical advances propose linking micromachismo with the concept of "gender microaggressions" [9], understood as subtle but constant expressions of hostility or devaluation towards women; This approach allows us to understand coercive micromachismo as part of a continuum of symbolic micro-violence that is naturalized in university coexistence.

On the other hand, coercive micromachismo can be understood from different theoretical approaches of social psychology, the theory of power and control, argues that interpersonal relationships are usually structured around asymmetrical dynamics, in which men use subtle strategies of psychological, economic or emotional pressure to maintain their dominance [10].

From the theory of social identity, she explains that individuals tend to define themselves based on their belonging to social groups, in patriarchal contexts, belonging to the male group is linked to status of authority, legitimizing practices of female subordination such as micromachismos [11].

Likewise, social learning theory states that these behaviors are reproduced through the observation of family, community, and media models that reinforce male authority [12]. On the other hand, gender role theory indicates that social expectations assign men the role of leadership and decision-making, while women are attributed obedience and care, reproducing patterns of control [13].

In addition, Connell [14], proposes the notion of "hegemonic masculinities", explaining how men are socialized in models of power that privilege dominance and authority, which are reflected in micro-macho behaviors within academic spaces; These masculinities are learned, reinforced and normalized by the institutional and family environment.

Finally, structural perspectives such as the theory of patriarchy [15] and the concept of symbolic violence [16] argue that coercive micromachismo constitutes a form of invisible domination, legitimized by culture, which generates inequality through practices considered normal in everyday life.

Thus, coercive micromachismo can be read as an expression of institutional symbolic violence [2], which operates through hidden curricula, exclusionary academic language or daily practices of interaction, configuring a system of legitimization that reinforces female subordination even in spaces that promote formal equality.

The review of previous studies on the study variable has been described as a form of symbolic violence that, in a subtle and daily way, reinforces female subordination and maintains unequal power relations [17]. For this reason, international research highlights that this type of practice is expressed through psychological and moral control, limiting women's autonomy [4].

In Latin America, it has been shown that microforms of machismo in university environments are associated with structural factors such as curriculum, institutional leadership, and the lack of equity policies, these findings reinforce the need to address the study variable from a broad sociocultural perspective and not only behavioral [18,19].

In the Peruvian context, Ramírez et al. [8], validated the scale of coercive micromachismo in university students, estimating the measurement of the variable; likewise, the study by Manrique-Angulo [20] in a Peruvian region identified medium and high levels of micromachismo associated with the acceptance of control practices, in addition, they reported negative consequences on university academic coexistence and on the emotional health of female students.

In this sense, there is evidence of a theoretical gap in the Peruvian context on coercive micromachismo due to the lack of academic attention; empirical evidence shows few studies and in a single field of study; This situation reveals that the gap also arises around its real magnitude, psychosocial effects and its relationship with other sociodemographic and academic variables, making it necessary to expand the research in different university contexts.

Therefore, this study is based on the need to generate scientific evidence that contributes to making these covert forms of violence visible, strengthening awareness programs on gender equity and guiding institutional policies in higher education, in this way, the research will contribute to the academic field, as well as to the construction of more inclusive university environments free of discriminatory practices.

Therefore, it was proposed to analyze the presence of coercive micromachismo in Peruvian university students according to sociodemographic variables.

2. Method

2.1. Type of study

A non-experimental, quantitative, basic and cross-sectional design was used, collecting data at a certain time (first semester of 2025), the level was descriptive comparative, allowing the identification of the levels of this phenomenon and the association with social and demographic variables of the students [21].

The study did not seek regional representativeness, but rather an exploratory-descriptive analysis that provides initial empirical evidence on coercive micromachismo in Peruvian university contexts; therefore, the results are not generalized to the total number of students in the country but are interpreted as an approach to local gender dynamics in higher education.

2.2. Participants

1000 students from public and private universities in a region of Peru participated, selected through non-probabilistic convenience sampling, suitable for descriptive studies [22].

The sample size was calculated with the G*Power 3.1 program. [23], considering a median effect, a significance level of .05 and a statistical power of .80, which ensured the adequacy of the number of participants and the robustness of the statistical analyses (effectiveness of statistical comparison tests).

2.3. Instrument

The Coercive Micromachismo Scale (MMC-18), developed and validated in the Peruvian university population [8], was applied; the final version is composed of 18 items in Likert format of five options (1= never to 5= always), organized in two dimensions: Subordination (attitudes of dependence and obedience towards men) and stereotypes (rigid beliefs about gender roles).

The validity of the content was established by expert judgment, reaching adequate values of the V of Aiken; construct validity was performed with exploratory factor analysis (KMO= .948; Bartlett $p < .001$). Reliability was high, with an overall Cronbach's alpha of .93 (subordination $\alpha = .92$; stereotypes $\alpha = .75$). The scale is a valid and reliable instrument to evaluate coercive micromachismo in Peruvian university students.

The instrument remained unchanged in this application to ensure comparison, verifying its internal consistency in the local sample $\alpha = .92$. In addition, the factorial invariance by sex was reviewed by exploratory analysis, showing a stable structure in both groups.

2.4. Procedure

Institutional management was carried out with the participating universities to obtain the corresponding authorization and guarantee access to the student population. Subsequently, it was coordinated with the academic and welfare areas to facilitate contact with students. The application of the instrument (MMC-18) was carried out in person in previously authorized classrooms and in some cases, in digital format through links distributed by institutional mail, after information on the objectives and purpose of the study. In all cases, voluntary participation and confidentiality of the data were ensured in accordance with the established ethical guidelines.

2.5. Ethical considerations

The research was carried out following an orderly and ethically responsible process, the informed consent of the participants was guaranteed, who participated voluntarily, and the confidentiality of the data was safeguarded in accordance with Peruvian regulations (RM No. 233-2020-MINSA) and the Declaration of Helsinki.

2.6. Data analysis

The collected information was processed with the Jamovi software (version 2.5). It began with the debugging of the database, eliminating incomplete records. Subsequently, descriptive statistical procedures were applied, obtaining means, medians, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages to characterize the participants and describe the levels of coercive micromachismo in their dimensions.

Since the normality tests indicated the absence of normal distribution, nonparametric statistical tests were used: Mann-Whitney's U for two-group comparisons and the Kruskal-Wallis test to compare more than two groups, likewise, in all analyses the size of the effect was reported, in order to complement the statistical significance ($p < .05$) and assess the practical magnitude of the differences found.

3. Results

The descriptive analysis of the sociodemographic variables of the participants was carried out, finding the following information: The mean age was 24.21 years with a standard deviation of 6.11 years; 38% were men and 62% women; 48% study at a public university and 52% at a private one; 43.3% study in a social sciences program, 20.5% in health sciences and 36.2% in science and/or engineering; 50% study and 50% study and work; 68% are part of a nuclear family, 23% are single-parent and 9% are extended; 65% live in

urban areas and 35% in rural areas; 79% profess the Catholic religion, 4% none, 4% Adventist, 2% Mormon, 3% Evangelist and 8% Christian.

Table 1. A high presence of coercive micromachismo was found (56%), reflecting the persistence of behaviors and beliefs that reinforce gender inequalities. In the subordination dimension, the levels were also high (53%), indicating acceptance of female dependency dynamics compared to men. Regarding the stereotype dimension, moderate predominated (49%) with a tendency towards high levels (29%), indicating that a relevant sector of students still maintain traditional beliefs about gender roles; identifying that micromachismo is a form of symbolic violence and normalizes in university contexts.

Table 1. Level of presence of coercive micromachismo

Variable	Measurer	F(x)	%
Coercive micromachismo	Low presence	260	26.0%
	Moderate presence	180	18.0%
	High presence	560	56.0%
	Total	1000	100.0%
Dimension Subordination	Low presence	240	24.0%
	Moderate presence	230	23.0%
	High presence	530	53.0%
	Total	1000	100.0%
Dimension Stereotypes	Low presence	220	22.0%
	Moderate presence	490	49.0%
	High presence	290	29.0%
	Total	1000	100.0%

Table 2. When comparing the results of micromachismo with sociodemographic variables (two independent groups), significant differences were found ($p < .05$), according to sex, type of university, occupation and area of residence: men, those who study and work, those from public universities and students living in rural areas who presented higher scores of coercive micromachismo.

In this sense, micromacho beliefs and attitudes tend to be reproduced with greater intensity in men and in contexts where traditional gender structures persist (such as rural areas or in educational institutions with less access to awareness programs), likewise, the situation of studying and working can reinforce the internalization of traditional roles and control practices learned in family and work environments. increasing micro-machismo in these groups

Table 2. Comparison of two independent groups

Variables	Group	N	Media	SD	p	ES
Sex	Man	380	47.20	14.45	<.001	.535
	Woman	620	34.02	11.66		
Type of university	Public	480	42.35	13.84	<.001	.312
	Private	520	35.46	13.95		
Occupation	Studies	500	34.44	11.87	<.001	.369
	Study and work	500	43.64	15.05		
Area of residence	Urban	650	38.05	13.67	.009	.099
	Rural	350	40.89	15.27		

Note. $H_a \mu \neq \mu$. U = statistical test, N = sample, SD = standard deviation, p = level of significance (.05), ES = effect size.

Table 3. The results of coercive micromachismo were compared with the type of family, the area of studies and religion (comparison of k independent groups) finding statistically significant differences ($p < .05$), with students coming from extended families, science and/or engineering students and Christian religion students obtaining the highest scores.

The findings show that more hierarchical or traditional family environments can reinforce practices of gender subordination, in the same way, in certain academic areas, stereotypes associated with masculinity and the traditional division of roles persist, and finally, the cultural weight of conservative religious beliefs can contribute to the legitimization of male authority and the naturalization of unequal roles.

Table 3. Comparison of K independent groups

Variables	Family	N	Media	SD	p	ES
Family Type	Nuclear	680	39.26	13.75	<.001	.0334
	Monoparental	230	35.09	12.49		
	Extensive	90	47.44	18.5		
Area of studies	Social sciences	433	35.46	12.87	<.001	.0545
	Health Sciences	205	40.00	14.70		
Religion	Science and/or Engineering	362	42.78	14.71	<.001	.211
	No	40	30.00	3.72		
	Catholic	790	39.38	13.76		
	Adventist	40	22.50	1.68		
	Mormon	20	29.00	3.08		
	Evangelist	30	27.67	7.54		
	Christian	80	55.25	12.02		

Note. H = statistical test, p = level of significance (.05), ES = effect size. N = sample, SD = standard deviation.

Table 4 Age was correlated with coercive micromachismo and its dimensions, finding significant direct and low-intensity correlations, micromachismo ($r=.133^{**}$), subordination ($r=.113^{**}$) and stereotypes ($r=.132^{***}$). These results indicate that the older you are, the greater the increase in micro-macho attitudes. Therefore, socialization in traditional contexts tends to reinforce more rigid gender beliefs and practices in young adults.

Table 4. Correlation of age with coercive micromachismo

Variables	Tests	Age	Micromachism	Subordination	Stereotypes
Age	Spearman	—			
	G1	—			
	p-value	—			
Micromachism	Spearman	0.133***	—		
	G1	998	—		
	p-value	<.001	—		
Subordination	Spearman	0.113***	0.982***	—	
	G1	998	998	—	
	p-value	<.001	<.001	—	
Stereotypes	Spearman	0.132***	0.805***	0.693***	—

Variables	Tests	Age	Micromachism	Subordination	Stereotypes
	G1	998	998	998	—
	p-value	<.001	<.001	<.001	—

Table 2. (Continued)

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

4. Discussion

The aim of this study was to analyze the presence of coercive micromachismo in Peruvian university students according to sociodemographic variables. The results of this study show a high presence of coercive micromachismo in university students, confirming that these practices continue to be normalized in the academic context, perpetuating gender hierarchies [2]. The subordination dimension reached a high level, observing the acceptance of dynamics of female dependence on men, while in the stereotypes dimension it showed a moderate predominance. These results coincide with what Bonino [1] and Bourdieu [16] have pointed out, who describe micromachismo as a form of symbolic violence that is culturally legitimized and restricts women's autonomy in everyday interactions, persisting in academic spaces [19].

Sociodemographic comparisons revealed that men, students at public universities, those who study and work, and those who live in rural areas obtained higher scores, coinciding with research that associates these characteristics with a greater reproduction of traditional gender beliefs in rural contexts and in men exposed to more rigid sociocultural structures [18]; Likewise, the fact that students who work in addition to studying have higher levels demonstrates the influence of work environments where hierarchical relationships and patriarchal patterns still prevail [24].

When considering other variables, it was observed that the scores were significantly higher in students from extended families, science and/or engineering, and the Christian religion, demonstrating the influence of family, academic, and cultural contexts on the permanence of micromachismo; the traditional family structure can perpetuate dynamics of control and subordination due to the intensity of machismo, poverty, alcohol consumption and unemployment [25]; while in certain areas of study, associated with the high presence of men, gender stereotypes associated with male leadership and rationality persist, legitimizing male dominance [19,26]. In turn, the cultural aspect of conservative religious beliefs can contribute to reinforcing male authority and naturalizing role inequality [27].

Regarding age, direct and significant correlations were identified, although of low magnitude, indicating that, although the effect is small, the older the age, the greater the presence of more rigid attitudes towards gender roles; This result coincides with studies that highlight that socialization processes in older generations tend to be more linked to traditional cultural models [20].

Therefore, a crucial aspect to highlight is that, despite access to higher education, there are high levels of coercive micro-machismo in university students, confirming that the educational level by itself does not guarantee the overcoming of traditional gender beliefs and practices, because these are deeply rooted in the culture and are transmitted through the family, religion and wider socialization [28]. In this way, the university, although it is a space for academic and critical training, is not immune to the reproduction of symbolic inequalities.

Therefore, coercive micromachismo is a current and significant phenomenon in the Peruvian university population, sustained both by subordination practices and by stereotyped beliefs, likewise, its association

with sociodemographic variables shows that it is not an isolated phenomenon, but a social and cultural construction that crosses different training spaces.

In this sense, it is necessary to implement institutional policies and awareness programs in universities, aimed at the deconstruction of gender stereotypes, the promotion of equitable relationships and the prevention of forms of symbolic violence that affect the coexistence and integral development of students.

On the other hand, the study presented limitations that must be considered, a non-probabilistic sampling was used for convenience, restricting the generalization of the results to the entire university population; A cross-sectional design was used, which only allows describing associations at a specific time, without establishing causality. Likewise, the use of self-reports may have generated social desirability biases. And the willingness of the students to participate, as it was a sensitive issue, some showed resistance, hasty or incomplete answers, forcing them to purge them in the database.

Within the future lines of research, the sample should be expanded, replicating the study in other regions of Peru, allowing external validity; longitudinal studies should be considered, which allow the evolution of micromachismo to be analyzed; include qualitative analyses, to complement quantitative measurement in order to understand the subjective experiences of students in the face of micromachismo; and finally, to integrate association variables such as psychosocial factors (self-esteem, well-being, academic climate or social support) to understand their effects on university life.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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