

Use of TikTok: A Quasi-Experimental Study for the Transformation of Sexist Attitudes in Adolescents

María Fernanda Nagua Suárez¹, María Luisa Bazán Guzmán², Edgar Andrés Cueva Tipán³, Germanía Lucía Freire Macías⁴, Sonia Beatriz Loyola Quistial⁵, Tamariz Nunjar Hidalgo Oclides⁶, Carlos Luis Álvarez Vásquez⁷

Abstract

Sexist attitudes in the educative environment are present more usually on a daily basis, and nowadays with the social media they spread widely; nevertheless, it is also possible to perform preventive actions through them. Thus, the current research aim is to determine that the application of the formative program Tik Tok decrease the sexist attitudes among the students of the Educative Unit, Ecuador 2023. The study is applied, with a quantitative approach and a quasi-experimental design; in the sample 60 students participated and they were divided into two groups, 30 students in the control group and 30 students in the experimental group, to this last one a pre-test and a post-test was applied as an instrument which was adapted from Bonilla, et al (2022) about sexist attitudes and the survey technique. With the purpose to accomplish the study aim a program was design in TikTok with 16 sessions in order to treat with sexist, benevolent and hostile attitudes. At the moment of verifying the outcomes of the general hypothesis, an improvement against sexist attitudes were evidenced in both groups. The analysis showed a T-Student value of $p = 0.00$ ($p < 0.01$), demonstrating that the TikTok formative program has performed a fundamental role in the notorious improvement of these attitudes.

Keywords: *TikTok, social media, sexist attitudes.*

INTRODUCTION

The historical analysis of sexuality and how it has impacted attitudes towards sexual behavior has been the subject of research. (Boira, Chilet, Jaramillo, & Reinoso, 2017) During confinement, social networks became relevant educational tools, especially for young people (Galvan, Briceño, Darraz, & Guerrero, 2021) Given the persistence of sexist attitudes in Ecuadorian society, the use of classrooms and social networks, especially TikTok, was proposed to address aspects of gender-based violence. The research focused

¹ Master Universitario en Métodos de Enseñanza en Educación Personalizada, Universidad César Vallejo Ext. Piura, Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas, Ecuador, mnagua@ucvvirtual.edu.pe, Orcid: 0000-0001-7496-2307

² Doctora en Comunicación Social, Universidad César Vallejo, Piura – Perú, mbazan@unitru.edu.pe, Orcid 0000-0003-0901-7725

³ Magister En Innovación En Educación, Universidad César Vallejo Ext. Piura Santo Domingo de los Tsáchilas, Ecuador, eacuevac@ucvvirtual.edu.pe, Orcid: 0000-0003-3582-7270

⁴ Master Universitario en Métodos, de Enseñanza en Educación Personalizada, Universidad César Vallejo, Piura – Perú, gfreire@ucvvirtual.edu.pe, Orcid 00000001-9152-3410

⁵ Magíster en Innovación Educativa, Universidad César Vallejo, Piura – Perú, sloyola@ucvvirtual.edu.pe, Orcid: 0000-0002-6749-3642

⁶ Universidad César Vallejo, Piura – Perú, Orcid 0000-0002-4512-6120

⁷ Master en Educación, Universidad César Vallejo-Piura, calvarezva89@ucvvirtual.edu.pe, Orcid: 0000-0002-9891-8383

on raising awareness and promoting respect in the classroom, taking an interactive approach.

The strategy included the use of familiar technologies, such as social media, to foster positive attitudes towards gender equality within and outside the school environment (Boira et al., 2017). In today's day and age, TikTok not only functions as a platform for sharing entertaining videos, but as an educational tool that offers teens various ways to learn and discuss content, both inside and outside the school environment.

According to Gómez (2021), the significant importance of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) is recognized, they have generated changes in society and in the educational field, demanding that they be adjusted and meet the needs of the community. Therefore, teachers must have educational resources and technical skills to face the challenges arising from these new information channels. The aim of this article is to demonstrate whether the application of the TikTok training program decreases sexist attitudes in students of an Educational Unit, Ecuador 2023.

Under a theoretical approach, it was based on social learning theory, which emphasizes obtaining knowledge through the observation of social models, such as content creators on TikTok who promote gender equality. Likewise, the theory of social information processing was considered, highlighting the significant influence of active social information processing in the configuration of behaviors and attitudes.

From a practical perspective, TikTok presented itself as a familiar platform for young people, being free and easy to use for recording and editing videos. In terms of methodology, the application of statistical analyses, surveys, content analysis and case studies was suggested. The application of hypothesis testing and correlation analysis was proposed to assess changes in students' attitudes after the formative use of TikTok. The social focus of the research was to provide information that would sensitize the community to the importance of addressing sexist attitudes, using online prevention as a key tool. It was hoped that this information would contribute to the gradual reduction of this problem, which often leads to aggression and discrimination, affecting mental health and, in extreme cases, causing critical situations.

Ultimately, the research sought to empower knowledgeable people to treat everyone with respect, promoting the building of a more equitable society. The case study is developed within the 24 de Mayo Educational Unit, in which it was directly evidenced that its students face the problem of sexist attitudes among young people.

Despite the absence of specific studies, campaigns have been carried out within the institution; This allowed us to raise the following research question: Could the implementation of TikTok's training program reduce sexist attitudes in students at this institution in Santo Domingo by 2023? In the article by Muratori and Casadei (2022) entitled "Sexism in university degree students of a military institution", published by the Scientific Journal of the University of Belgrano, they sought to know the degree of sexism and gender stereotypes in university students from a military organization. A pilot analysis was carried out with the participation of 378 people of both genders.

The results indicated that participants exhibited subjectively elevated levels of sexism, with hostile sexism being even more pronounced than benevolent sexism. In addition, most of them had strong gender stereotypes. Statistically significant differences were identified based on sociodemographic variations. Vieira (2020) also analysed the connection between sexism and attitudes towards gender-based violence. The results indicated the prevalence of ambivalent sexism, both on the general scale and on the hostile sexism and benevolent sexism subscales.

Regarding attitudes towards gender-based violence, high levels were observed, highlighting the predominance of the behavioral reaction in the adolescent population. It is pertinent within the study to address the stage of adolescence as a contextual

framework of the object of study, Adolescence, being a phase full of transitions and processes of change, attracts considerable attention, being considered as a crucial phase in the life of an individual, being able to exert notable impacts, whether positive or negative, with significant and remarkable results. It is important to note that, from a perspective of social construction, according to Papalia, Wendkos and Duskin (2009), in pre-industrial societies, children went through the transition to adulthood through maturation and work. It was in the 20th century, in the West, when adolescence was defined as a stage of independent development that requires more time to experience these changes.

Today, this process is perceived as more extensive and meaningful, and goes beyond simply reaching maturity or generating income. From a scientific and psychological perspective, adolescence is described as "the transformational development that encompasses the period between childhood and adulthood, involving significant changes in the physical, cognitive, and psychosocial aspects of the individual" (Papalia, Wendkos, & Duskin, 2009, p. 461).

This process involves a series of fundamental changes in different aspects of life, which are connected to the other phases and their arrangement according to an individual's chronological age. In addition, in relation to this topic, social networks, according to Lozares' (2018) definition, refer to "a clearly defined set of actors, which can be individuals, groups, organizations, communities, global societies, etc., linked through relationships" (p. 45).

In this context, the term "social network" can be used to describe any grouping of individuals with some common bond or association. This concept goes beyond the online realm, encompassing relationships, actors, and behaviors that also translate to the Internet. In other words, social networks encompass a set of platforms that provide communication, interaction and content creation services through the network, being accessible to people from all over the world.

At the end of 2021, according to the Semrush platform, it mentions that the most considered social networks worldwide and that occupy prominent positions in the top 10 are Facebook, YouTube, WhatsApp, Messenger, Instagram and TikTok, among others. Specifically focusing attention on TikTok, this social network has seen a significant increase in popularity in recent years, reaching its peak during extraordinary situations such as the global pandemic. According to Baumann (2021), during this period, TikTok became a complete entertainment and fun experience for millions of users around the world, consolidating itself as one of the most used platforms today.

Therefore, it is important to understand the nature of this social network. TikTok is a platform that makes it possible to record, create, edit and share short videos, with a maximum duration of 60 seconds or, in more recent formats, up to 3 minutes. These videos can include various effects, sounds, filters, and texts, following current trends. By uploading these videos, they are accessible to any user, as the platform allows you to view the content of the people you follow and explore new creations by other users through hashtags that identify topics and preferences (Belén & Peralta, 2020).

According to Baumann (2021), TikTok managed to reach an impressive 689 million users during the year 2020, which is evidence of its wide reach and prominent position in interaction through social networks. In addition, it is characterized by being considered "The perfect application for Generation Z", mainly covering teenagers and young adults, who constitute the majority of its current users, according to the established generational categories (the first born between 1978 and 1992, and the second born before 2001).

According to the Bee Digital Team (2020), Generation Z, also known as post-millennials, identify as true digital natives. These individuals are distinguished by a selective use of technology, seeking to generate their own personalized content and access specific forms of entertainment according to their preferences. Solís' (2016) essay "The Gender

Perspective in Education" addresses inequalities in teaching and highlights the crucial role of school education in overcoming gender stereotypes. The responsibility of educational institutions to transmit knowledge and non-sexist values is underlined, preparing the current generation to face the challenges of society and seek equality.

As well as in Díaz's (2021) research on adults aged 18 to 60 years in Quito, Ecuador, he explored the relationship between attachment styles and sexist attitudes in 1373 participants (55.4% women, 44.6% men). The results indicated differences in sexist attitudes between secure and fearful/worried attachment, with no such discrepancies in distant attachment. It is suggested that sexist attitudes are linked to attachment styles derived from negative self-models, affecting both genders.

They concluded that those with negative self-esteem showed a greater propensity to sexist attitudes. It should be noted that within the analysis of sexist attitudes, various theories stand out that offer valuable perspectives on this social phenomenon, starting mainly with feminism, as a critical theory, it has undergone an evolution over three centuries and is closely linked to women's activism in their search for gender equality (Nogueiras, 2018). Sau (1990) in her *Feminist Ideological Dictionary*, defines feminism as a social and political movement that emerged almost at the end of the eighteenth century, implying the awareness by the collective of women about the domination and exploitation that they have experienced and continue to experience within the patriarchal system throughout various historical stages and models of production. This movement propels women into action in search of the liberation of their gender and adapts to the transformations that society requires at any given time.

As well as for the understanding of learning through educational projects, the social learning theory of Bandura and Walters (1963) has been considered highlights the dominant influence to which an individual is repeatedly subjected, especially during youth, where there is greater social pressure and behaviors tend to be adopted (Tapia & Monzon, 1963). 2021).

According to Bandura's theory of social learning, children acquire and modify behaviors and responses through observation of adults in their closest social environment, regardless of whether or not there is an associated reward (Tituaña, 2022). Expanding on this approach, it can be considered that social learning is not only limited to the imitation of behaviors, but also encompasses the internalization of norms, values, and attitudes present in the social environment.

Educational projects, by providing a structured context, offer opportunities for the observation of positive role models and the internalization of knowledge beyond the mere transmission of information. In relation to sexism, a term academically supported thanks to the studies of Glick and Fiske, it refers to discrimination and stereotypes based on gender, assigning specific characteristics and behaviors to individuals according to their gender, perpetuating prejudices and misconceptions learned in the social and cultural environment.

Given the growing influence of social media in the formation of perceptions and attitudes, this research seeks to systematically understand and measure the change in students' sexist attitudes before and after participating in the program. TikTok emerges as a valuable resource for addressing sexist attitudes in the study. The platform facilitates access to educational content, promoting collaboration and direct communication between students.

With short and creative videos, TikTok offers an engaging learning experience and contributes to building an online student community. This innovative approach not only addresses sexist attitudes, but also provides a space for emotional support and motivation. Integrating TikTok into the study of sexist attitudes is presented as an effective strategy,

highlighting the importance of its conscious use to maximize its positive impact on the educational process.

METHODS

This quasi-experimental design is particularly useful when randomization is not practical or ethical, such as in educational or social situations. Thus, a balance has been sought to be maintained between methodological rigor and consideration of the complexity inherent in the phenomena studied. This study presents a quantitative approach, with an applied design, the type of study is observational descriptive test-type. The sample was selected in a non-probabilistic way and was made up of 60 young people, 30 from the second BGU "C" and 30 BGU "D" respectively from the morning session by authorization for the development of the questionnaire considering the easy access of the students, also taking into consideration the permission of the rector and parents. Applying the Adolescent Sexism Detection Scale (DSA) test, made up of 16 questions that refer to the attitude of hostile sexism with its indicators; domineering paternalism, competitive gender differentiation, and heterosexual hostility. On the other hand, the attitude of benevolent sexism with its respective indicators; protective paternalism, complementary gender differentiation, and heterosexual intimacy. For this section, 10 questions were asked, giving a total of 26 questions from the questionnaire.

This research is developed under established processes and resolutions adopted by the vice-rectorate of the Cesar Vallejo University where each student signs his or her responsibility document committing himself to the development of a clear study, taking research already developed, respectively citing each idea taken, thus guaranteeing the student ethics that should characterize a researcher. The statistical analysis of the results was carried out with the Social Science Statistical Package (SPSS) version 25 software, where tables are developed starting with the sociodemographic data, followed by the descriptive data according to scores and level of each of the applied test.

RESULTS

As a first aspect, the sociodemographic information of the control and experimental group is shown.

Board 1. Gender of the control and experimental group

Control Group		Experimental Group	
Female	Male	Female	Male
56,7%	43,3%	46,7%	53,3%

Note. Data generated from the information collection instrument. Own elaboration

According to the distribution of participants in the study, in the Control Group, 56.7% are women and 43.3% are men, adding up to a total of 30 participants. In the Experimental Group, 46.7% are women and 53.3% are men, also with a total of 30 participants. The data make it possible to compare the gender composition in both groups and are essential for assessing possible differences in the results of the study.

Board 2. Levels of sexist attitudes

Levels	Hostile		Benevolent	
	Control Group	Experimental Group	Control Group	Experimental Group
Low	20,0%	3,3%	3,3%	0,0%
Middle	73,3%	76,7%	56,7%	53,3%

High	6,7%	20,0%	40,0%	46,7%
Total	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%	100,0%

Note. Results obtained by entering the database into the SPSS program. Own elaboration

According to sexist attitudes and the level at which the adolescents in the study presented in the Control Group, 20% showed low hostile attitudes, 73.3% had medium hostile attitudes and 6.7% had high hostile attitudes. In the Experimental Group, 3.3% showed low hostile attitudes, 76.7% had medium hostile attitudes, and 20% had high hostile attitudes. Regarding benevolent attitudes in the pre-test of the Control Group, 3.3% showed low benevolent attitudes, 56.7% had medium benevolent attitudes and 40% had high benevolent attitudes. In the Experimental Group, 0% show low benevolent attitudes, 53.3% have medium benevolent attitudes, and 46.7% have high benevolent attitudes.

Board 3. Levels of sexist attitudes - intervention (social network)

Levels	Pre Test	Post Test
Low	30,0%	100.0%
Middle	43,3%	0,0%
High	26,7%	0,0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%

Note. Results obtained by entering the database into the SPSS program. Own elaboration

On the other hand, the levels of sexist attitudes in the Experimental Group before and after an intervention. In the Pre-Test, 30% had low attitudes, 43.3% had medium attitudes, and 26.7% had high attitudes. After the intervention in the Post Test, a significant change was observed: the percentage of low attitudes increased to 66.7%, while medium and high attitudes decreased to 10.0% and 6.67%, respectively. These results indicate a positive impact of the intervention on the reduction of sexist attitudes in the Experimental Group.

Board 4. Final Results

SEXIST ATTITUDES					
Levels		Low	Middle	High	Total
Control Group	Pre Test	30%	40%	30%	100%
	Post Test	0,0%	13,3%	86,7%	100%
Experimental Group	Pre Test	30,0%	43,3%	26,7%	100,0%
	Post Test	100,0%	0,0%	0,0%	100,0%

Finally, it is evident that, in the Control Group, in the pre-test, 30% show low sexist attitudes, 40% have sexist attitudes at the medium level and 30% have sexist attitudes at a high level. After the intervention (post-test), 86.7% of the group developed high sexist attitudes, with a significant decrease in low and medium attitudes. In the Experimental Group, in the pre-test, 30% show low sexist attitudes, 43.3% have medium sexist attitudes and 26.7% have high sexist attitudes. After the intervention, 100% of the group has completely eliminated sexist attitudes, showing positive change.

DISCUSSION

The use of digital media is common and an integral part of adolescents' relationships and daily lives. According to Linares et al. (2019), the vast majority of adolescents, aged

between 12 and 17, own a mobile phone, and 95% are connected to the Internet. Reed et al. (2020) also point out, in a study carried out by Blanco in 2014, that 89% and 82% of people created profiles on Tuenti and WhatsApp, respectively. In addition, the presence of profiles on less popular social networks, such as Instagram, Ask.fm and Line, was observed.

In terms of the time that participants spend on social networks, it has been shown that they spend approximately 1 to 3 hours per day (Blanco, 2014). This fact has increased over time since the article by Mass et al. (2019) reflects that young people spend more than 6 hours online.

In contrast, the Experimental Group experienced a complete elimination of hostile attitudes after the intervention. This drastic change suggests that the training program on TikTok was effective in reducing and, in some cases, eradicating hostile attitudes in participants.

The above is contrasted with what was found in research that provided guidelines for the development of new studies, an article entitled "Sexism in university degree students of a military institution", published by the Scientific Journal of the University of Belgrano, where Muratori and García (2022) sought to know the degree of sexism and gender stereotypes in university students from a military organization. A pilot analysis was carried out with the participation of 378 people of both genders.

The results indicated that participants exhibited subjectively elevated levels of sexism, with hostile sexism being even more pronounced than benevolent sexism. In addition, most of them had strong gender stereotypes. Statistically significant differences were identified based on sociodemographic variations.

The results of this study also indicate a significant difference in benevolent attitudes between the two groups. While the Control Group experienced an 83.3% increase in high levels after the intervention, the Experimental Group managed to completely eliminate these attitudes. This result suggests that the training program is not only effective in reducing hostile attitudes, but also has a positive impact on the elimination of benevolent attitudes, showing a profound change in sexist attitudes.

To which Donoso et al. (2018) point out in their research that, although adolescents commonly claim to have observed acts of violence, they confirm that they are not aggressors or victims and have played this role more broadly. They consider this data to be contradictory because, despite the large number of observers, the number of attackers and victims is remarkably small. Because of this, they believe that teens can't recognize violent acts when they're involved in them, but they can recognize violent acts when they're not involved.

According to Martín et al., (2016) it is crucial to overcome both hostile and benevolent sexism in order to achieve the equal participation of the young population in a society free of gender-based violence. In addition, it underlines the need for detailed research on the use of social networks and their connections with sexist, stereotyped attitudes, as well as those that promote equality and co-education. These objectives define the purpose and motivation of the second research project of the Chair, which mainly seeks to eradicate gender-based violence and promote equality between women and men as a supreme value.

Despite this, stereotyped and sexist beliefs and attitudes persist among teachers. Research by (Bermejo & Hernández, 2019) revealed that more than 75% of the faculty could currently be transmitting sexist beliefs. Other studies conducted with preservice teachers in both Spain and Latin America indicate that sexist beliefs coexist in teachers' set of social ideas, which could have a direct influence on school practice (Bonilla-Algovia et al., 2022)

These data are in line with those of the study by Martín et al. (2016) who report on the difficulties that young people often face in identifying violent behaviors. Well, most respondents perceive teens' behavior toward their partners as expected and normal when given love and trust. However, these actions show clear signs of gender-based violence.

When comparing these results with Muratori and García (2022), the unique effectiveness of implementing a training program on TikTok is highlighted. While the background supports the general idea that training programs can influence attitudes, our study provides a specific and novel perspective by using a platform popular with young people. The complete elimination of certain sexist attitudes in the Experimental Group suggests that TikTok can be a powerful tool for attitude transformation.

These results have significant implications for the implementation of training programs in contemporary educational settings. The effectiveness of TikTok as an educational platform highlights the importance of adapting pedagogical strategies to today's media. Future research could explore the optimal duration of such programs and assess their long-term impact on participants' perceptions and behavior.

Highlighting the relevance of young people's participation in social networks, it is observed that digital media exert both positive and negative effects on children's social relationships. On the positive side, online communities offer a space to connect young people who may feel lonely or isolated, thus expanding their social circles and making it easier to strengthen and maintain relationships. Despite this, virtual environments can also increase the risk of problematic experiences in social relationships and in the realm of dating, by offering new opportunities for unhealthy behaviors (Reed et al., 2017; Estébanez, 2010).

This fact is supported by Donoso et al. (2018), the findings of the research reveal that the inclination towards aggressive behaviors is mostly associated with masculinity. On the other hand, it is observed that girls exhibit aggressive behaviors in contexts of violence linked to the myths of the discourse of romantic love. This dynamic was also identified in the study by Linares et al. (2019), where adolescent girls point out that male partners are the main perpetrators and disseminators of aggression.

Similarly, the EIGE study (2019) highlights that the percentage of young women who have been victims of online harassment exceeds that of young men 9% versus 6%. According to what has been reviewed within this research, it is evident that sexist behavior or attitudes of violence (hostility) are male students.

The participants, both boys and girls in this study, share with European research the perception of the various uses of social networks. Positive aspects, related to opportunities, are highlighted, as well as negative aspects, linked to risks. In the area of opportunities, it is observed that the use of virtual resources for teaching still depends mainly on individual initiatives of teachers or groups of teachers, without being part of institutional educational projects. In this sense, our first recommendation points towards the promotion of virtual space as a tool at the service of teaching.

These results suggest the possibility that gender stereotypes and sexist behaviors are already ingrained in the behavior of young people during adolescence, possibly learned during childhood under the influence of their immediate environment, such as family and school. (Bandura, 1977; Muñoz & Monreal, 2017).

For this reason, it is essential to integrate social networks into actions against gender-based violence, as they play a crucial role not only in preventing its occurrence, but also in curbing it (Blanco, 2014). Both Donoso et al. (2018) and (Martínez et al., 2017), based on the results of various studies, agree on the need to carry out educational interventions with adolescents to prepare them for gender-based violence 2.0, that is, that which manifests itself in online environments.

These educational initiatives are essential to raise awareness, sensitize, act and prevent both gender-based violence in particular and that which manifests itself in the digital sphere. It is critical to provide students with the essential tools so that they can identify and report instances of violence, whether online or offline. (Zweig et al., 2013).

To achieve this goal, schools play a crucial role, collaborating with other institutions and agents such as family, police and friends, among others. In the same vein, Martín et al. (2016) argue that not only is it essential to raise awareness about gender-based violence in all contexts, but also that greater training in the use of the Internet and social networks is required.

Based on this review and the results of various researches, the urgency of an educational intervention to raise awareness, sensitize, act and prevent in relation to this problem becomes clear. Most of the behaviors identified appear to be linked to a set of incorrect ideas or beliefs. In addition, it is observed that the adolescent population tends to adopt and normalize violent behaviors of men through social networks, behaviors that are clearly defined as gender-based violence.

It is crucial to recognize the limitations of this study. The sample size and duration of the intervention may have influenced the results. In addition, the self-reported nature of attitudes could introduce biases. It is suggested that future research address these limitations and consider replication of the study in diverse contexts.

CONCLUSIONS

From the information collected, it can be concluded that the technological environment, especially social networks (TikTok), is understood as a factor in mitigating sexist attitudes in both social and intimate relationships between young people and adolescents. Not only is it the medium that this population most often uses to maintain relationships with their peers, but it also provides a space to perpetrate violence and reinforce gender stereotypes protected by the benefits of technology. However, in this sense, the results of various studies show that this social group is not fully aware of the risks associated with the misuse of virtual environments and networks.

The results of this study, supported by a significance level $p = 0.00$, conclusively demonstrate that the implementation of TikTok's training program has had a significant impact on the reduction of sexist attitudes among students of an Educational Unit in Santo Domingo, Ecuador, during the year 2023. From high initial levels in both groups to the complete elimination of certain attitudes in the experimental group, the intervention has shown remarkable efficacy. With 100% of students not exhibiting sexist attitudes after the intervention, the results underline the success of the program in positively transforming perceptions and behaviors, thus consolidating its positive impact on the promotion of gender equality.

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