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“You Enjoy Talking about It More than Doing It”: Fake Narratives in Disdainful Relationships

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Abstract

Research has found that the coercive dominant discourse (CDD) can have a negative impact on girls' sexual pleasure. In this vein, a previous study found that girls who described relationships under the CDD as exciting also recognized a lack of sexual pleasure in these. One of the elements underlying this apparent contradiction was an identified mismatch between what the participants had experienced in such relationships, characterized for being disdainful, and what they had told their friends. Nonetheless, more research is needed in order to better understand how girls' narratives about their sexual-affective relationships differ from the ways in which they experienced them. The current study aims at identifying and analysing the presence of fake narratives in the interactions girls have with their peers regarding sexual-affective relationships. To this end, 10 communicative interviews were conducted with girls between 18 and 21 years of age. Results show that while participants recognize feeling a lack of pleasure in those disdainful relationships, they portrayed these as exciting when telling their peers about them, suppressing the negative feelings around them. These findings corroborate the presence of fake narratives in relation to disdainful relationships and bring new insights into the aspects these fabricated stories are built around.

Keywords: coercive dominant discourse, gender violence, fake narratives

“Te Gusta Más Contarlo que Hacerlo”: Narrativas Falsas en Relaciones Desdeñosas

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Resumen

La investigación ha encontrado que el discurso dominante coercitivo puede tener un impacto negativo en el placer sexual de las niñas. En este sentido, un estudio previo encontró que las chicas que describían las relaciones bajo el DCD como excitantes también reconocían una falta de placer sexual en estas. Uno de los elementos subyacentes a esta aparente contradicción fue un desajuste identificado entre lo que las participantes habían experimentado en tales relaciones, caracterizadas por ser desdeñosas, y lo que les habían dicho a sus amigas. No obstante, se necesita más investigación para comprender mejor cómo las narrativas de las chicas sobre sus relaciones afectivo-sexuales difieren de las formas en que las experimentaron. El presente estudio tiene como objetivo identificar y analizar la presencia de narrativas falsas en las interacciones que las chicas tienen con sus pares en relación con las relaciones afectivas-sexuales. Para ello, se realizaron 10 entrevistas comunicativas a chicas de entre 18 y 21 años. Los resultados muestran que, si bien las participantes reconocen sentir falta de placer en esas relaciones desdeñosas, las describen como emocionantes cuando las cuentan a sus compañeros, suprimiendo los sentimientos negativos que las rodean. Estos hallazgos corroboran la presencia de narrativas falsas en relación con las relaciones desdeñosas y aportan nuevos conocimientos sobre los aspectos en torno a los cuales se construyen estas historias fabricadas.

Palabras clave: discurso dominante coercitivo, violencia de género, falsas narrativas

Research has found a Coercive Dominant Discourse (CDD) that links attractiveness to individuals with violent attitudes, especially when it comes to hookups, and depicts non-violent people as not exciting (Puigvert & Flecha, 2018). Through socialization in this discourse by the media and peers, many individuals then internalize the association between attractiveness and violence. This way, their cognitive and affective schemata are affected and their feelings, thoughts and behaviors can be shaped by it even in unconscious ways (Puigvert Mallart et al., 2019).

Previous research on the CDD has shown that many women who had coerced relationships where they had had no pleasure omitted many negative details and explained them in an exciting way, sharing with their peers what they call fake narratives (Torras-Gómez et al., 2019). By telling and retelling a different story, making up a false narrative, some of them assumed this discourse and ended up having a positive memory of what was a violent relationship (especially hook-ups) (Racionero-Plaza, Puigvert, et al., 2021). However, no scientific research has yet analyzed these false narratives many girls tell their peers about the sexual-affective relationships they have.

The present qualitative research draws in this matter by interviewing 10 girls aged between 18 and 21 who had had disdainful sexual-affective relationships.

State of the Art

A growing body of scientific literature and statistical data shows that more and more adolescent and young girls' first sexual experiences are non-consensual, violent, forced, or disdainful (Dasil et al., 2020; Murray et al., 2016). Even more worrisome, many girls do not identify having suffered violence in those relationships and, in some cases, even remember them with positive feelings (Racionero-Plaza, Ugalde, Merodio, et al., 2020). To a great extent, today's mainstream and dominant discourses around sex have much to do with many young girls engaging in those experiences and not remembering them exactly as they happened (Torras-Gómez et al., 2019).

Among those discourses, scientific research has found the CDD, which imposes the link between attraction and violence by portraying individuals and relationships with violent attitudes as attractive, fun and exciting

(Gómez, 2015; Puigvert et al., 2019). Conveyed through different forms of entertainment (movies, shows, music...) and peer interactions, while the CDD presents violent masculinity models as the only attractive and desirable option, egalitarian models are deemed as convenient but lacking attractiveness and excitement (Gómez, 2015; Rodrigues-Mello et al., 2021; Villarejo et al., 2020; Villarejo-Carballido et al., 2022). In this way, the CDD leads to a double-standard frame of mind in which pleasure, fun, excitement and passion are separated from love, care, stability and egalitarianism (Gómez, 2015; Joanpere et al., 2021; Rios-González et al., 2018; Ruiz-Eugenio et al., 2021).

Along this line, findings from the field of socioneuroscience explain how the repeated socialization in the CDD through interactions with media and especially with peers reinforces the internalization of this discourse, that is, of the link between violence and attractiveness (Puigvert Mallart et al., 2019; Racionero-Plaza, Puigvert, et al., 2021; Racionero-Plaza, Ugalde, Merodio, et al., 2020; Racionero-Plaza, Ugalde, Vidu, et al., 2020). The CDD is not only internalized through experience, through engaging in disdainful sexual-affective relationships - especially hookups -, but also, and more so, through the ways in which girls who have had such experience tell their friends about it (Racionero-Plaza, Duque, et al., 2021; Torras-Gómez et al., 2019). This internalization through language progressively shapes one's autobiographical memories, beliefs, feelings and behaviors to the point that the reactions triggered by men and relationships portrayed as desirable by the CDD seem almost natural and unavoidable (Puigvert Mallart et al., 2019). Thus, far from being innate, these reactions are socially mediated by the influence of the CDD, exerted in the patriarchal system, in the interactions that girls have with their peers and their environment. When interviewing adolescent girls through the communicative methodology, many of them expressed they had stored a positive and exciting memory of what was a violent or disdainful relationship, which increases the likeliness of future victimization (Puigvert Mallart et al., 2019; Racionero-Plaza et al., 2018).

Peer interactions during adolescence are therefore essential when shaping girls' sexual-affective preferences and relationships, either influenced by the CDD or free from it (Padrós Cuxart et al., 2021; Racionero-Plaza, Piñero León, et al., 2020; Ruiz-Eugenio et al., 2020). Some studies have shown that when women talk to their friends about sex,

some do it with emotional purposes rather than informative ones (Pariera, 2018). They also show that some women engaging in peer sexual communication report higher levels of sexual self-efficacy and sexual self-esteem, but seem to be as well at greater risk of engaging in risky sexual behaviors (Pariera, 2018). Regarding adolescence and emerging adulthood, friends have shown to have an impact on teenagers' romantic relationships (Kochendorfer & Kerns, 2019; Racionero-Plaza, Duque, et al., 2021). When concerned about intimate relationships, friends' advice is more valued and sought than that of parents (Bleakley et al., 2018; Lefkowitz et al., 2004; Tagliabue et al., 2018). Indeed, the interactions between adolescents and their friends provide information about sexual peer norm perceptions and individual preferences related to those (Racionero-Plaza, Duque, et al., 2021; van de Bongardt et al., 2017). Support and advice received on this aspect contributes to the configuration of their personality, through feedback that allows them to integrate their sexual-experiences into their identity (Morgan & Korobov, 2012). It can also validate and encourage specific sexual-behaviors.

Therefore, talking with friends about sex-related issues shapes one's perception of sex and shapes one's identity (Morgan & Korobov, 2012), since teenagers compare with each other when assessing normativity in sexual experiences (Sennott & Mollborn, 2011). Interactions with friends can offer positive advice and support by, among others, conveying one's values (Sennott & Mollborn, 2011). For instance, Lefkowitz and colleagues showed that non-sexually-active adolescents in their study tend to discuss more abstinence than about sex with their friends (Lefkowitz et al., 2004) and acknowledge that their perceptions about virginity are shared among their closest friends, which leads to lesser feelings of pressure to engage in sexual activities (Sennott & Mollborn, 2011). Sexually-active adolescents, in turn, talk more frequently about sex-related issues. Sex communication can also increase awareness about harmful situations (Morgan & Korobov, 2012). For instance, participating adolescents discussing dangers related to sex showed greater sense of condom efficacy than those discussing abstinence (Lefkowitz et al., 2004).

However, close-friend interactions can also encourage and validate behaviors that can be risky through humor and others' related sexual experiences (Morgan & Korobov, 2012). Sexually active teenagers in Sennott and Mollborn (2011) reported engaging in sex in a context in which

their friends did too and how this reality encouraged their behavior. Similarly, adolescents in Prinstein and colleagues (2003) reported similar oral sex behavior than that of their friends. When those peer interactions are influenced by the CDD and portray disdainful hookups and boys as attractive, they create a context in which there is peer pressure to engage in violent relationships, thus reproducing and reinforcing the CDD (Racionero-Plaza, Duque, et al., 2021).

Morgan and Korobov (2012) also point out that what adolescents choose to share with their close friends may be slanted, which may impact in a different way their identity development. In this sense, a study with Singaporean college students showed how these students' perception of their peer's sexual activity tends to be magnified: their peers, mass-media consumption and what their peers choose to communicate makes them feel they are behind regarding sexual experiences (Chia & Lee, 2008). According to the authors, this situation leads to a pluralistic ignorance, a misadjustment between the real situation and the perception of those analysing it, which may have negative consequences on a student's sexual behavior and his/her sexual partners.

The existing scientific literature on how girls talk to their peers and friends about sexual-affective relationships has provided key elements to better understand why many girls still remember disdainful hookups as the most exciting and positive ones even years after (A. López de Aguilera et al., 2021; Torras-Gómez et al., 2019). Nevertheless, more research is needed on the ways in which the CDD influences these narratives. To advance in this direction, the current research aims to study how teenage girls' narratives of sexual-affective relationships differ from how they experienced such relationships.

Methodology

Design

This study examines the personal narratives that heterosexual teenage girls share with their group of peers regarding their sexual-affective relationships. More precisely, it focuses on how their narratives differ from how they actually experienced them. To this end, the current research has been designed under the communicative methodology approach (A. Gómez

et al., 2019; Melgar Alcantud et al., 2021), which has repeatedly shown its validity not only in describing social realities accurately, but in promoting and achieving social impact (Redondo-Sama et al., 2020). Under this methodology, researchers and participants work together through an egalitarian dialogue in which the former brings scientific evidence and the latter his or her relevant experience on the topic. Under such a framework, the current study implements communicative semi-structured interviews. Research has already shown how the dialogues established under this approach allow participants to reconstruct their memories dialogically, enabling them to both free the memories of imposed discourses and reach a deeper understanding of their own biography (G. López de Aguilera et al., 2021; Ugalde et al., 2022).

Participants

Participants in this study were ten young women (P1-P10) between 18 and 21 years of age. They were recruited purposively, only accounting for variety regarding socioeconomic and geographical backgrounds within the age range, and they all had had heterosexual relationships. None of the participants asked to withdraw from the study after signing the consent sheet.

Table 1
Overview of the participants¹

| Number | Pseudonym | Age | Region | Level of Studies |
|---------------|------------------|------------|----------------|-------------------------|
| P1 | Nerea | 20 | Basque Country | Secondary Education |
| P2 | Eduarne | 18 | Basque Country | Secondary Education |
| P3 | Virginia | 18 | Andalusia | Secondary Education |
| P4 | Idoia | 19 | Basque Country | Secondary Education |
| P5 | Leire | 18 | Basque Country | Secondary Education |
| P6 | Naroa | 18 | Basque Country | Secondary Education |
| P7 | Laia | 20 | Catalonia | Secondary Education |
| P8 | Ivet | 18 | Catalonia | Secondary Education |
| P9 | Eider | 21 | Basque Country | Secondary Education |
| P10 | Carmen | 18 | Andalusia | Secondary Education |

Materials and Procedure

The researchers involved in the study individually contacted the different participants and fully informed them about all the specifications of the study: its aim, its theoretical background and the materials and procedures that were going to be followed. All this information was also given in print through the information sheet for participants. Those interested after the explanation were given time to carefully read the information sheet and ask any further questions they had, which were answered by the researcher who contacted them. Next, they were given a consent form to sign, which clearly specified that participation was fully anonymous and voluntary and that they could withdraw from the research at any time. Participants could also decide on having their answers audio-recorded or noted down by the

researcher who interviewed them. The identities of the participants were concealed from the beginning through a code.

Semi-structured communicative interviews were conducted individually with each participant. The script was composed of 24 open-end questions targeting the conversations with their friends about their sexual-affective relationships; how they felt participating in them, as well as the reactions and behaviors of their peers. The script for the interviews was designed by all participant researchers taking into account previous scientific evidence on personal narratives and the CDD. Interviews lasted from 50' to 2h. All interviews were conducted either through Skype or by phone call and the participants' testimonies were all but in one case audio-recorded.

Data Analysis

All recorded narratives were transcribed and analyzed line-by-line as communicative acts, which include both verbal and non-verbal expressions, as well as accounting for the context of the experience for the analysis (Racionero-Plaza, Puigvert, et al., 2021; Rios & Christou, 2010).

Categories were defined by the researchers both inductively, from the content of the participants' interviews, and deductively, by taking into account the scientific literature available. Two researchers reviewed the data and proceeded to its categorization. Discrepancies between the researchers concerning the data coding were sorted out by consensus.

In their narratives, participants described their relationships and those of their friends including elements in line with the CDD (eg. pressure, attraction for guys with disdainful attitudes, submission...), even though the participants did not use the term CDD, which is an academic concept. All narratives shared by the participants included statements that support that what is shared in the peer group regarding sexual-affective relationships contains false narratives, as identified by the participants themselves.

Table 2.

Categories of analysis

| | |
|--|---|
| 1. The content of the shared narrative | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Purposely adding more excitement to the narratives• Omitting / polishing details |
| 2. Acknowledgment of the narratives as false | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Describing what happened in reality was unpleasant, as opposed to what was shared• Assuming that what others share is not true |

Results

The current study aims at identifying and analyzing the presence of fake narratives in the interactions girls have with their peers regarding some of their sexual-affective relationships. In this vein, two main aspects have been identified in the interviews: 1) the content of the narrative shared and how it is modified and 2) the acknowledgment by the participants that the narratives around their sexual-affective relationships are often fake.

Shaping the Content of the Shared Narrative

All participants in the study identify that they shaped the content of their narratives. Following their recounts, this was mainly done through two processes: a) by purposefully adding more excitement to the narratives and b) by omitting or polishing details.

Regarding the first, participants explain that they generally presented some of their sexual-affective relationships to their close group of friends as something more exciting than what they had experienced:

“Yes, we made up things, we exaggerated them. There was not something in particular in which I exaggerated, but it was as if it had been something that had made me very excited and I did not really care, it was just whatever”. (Narora, 18)

As Naroa explains, even when an experience was nothing thrilling to her, she used to share it with others as if it had been really exciting. This is a feeling that all participants share to some extent. In this line, Ivet shares that she presented some of her sexual-affective relationships as wilder:

“I exaggerated it, ‘wow it was super cool, very handsome’, I exaggerated it a lot. One of the first guys I was with, he didn’t do it very well, I felt bad but I said ‘wow, he has been super good’.”
(Ivet, 18)

In this excerpt, Ivet shows she felt the need to portray her sexual encounter as something very appealing to the rest, so she identifies a need to exaggerate things. Similarly, Nerea adds:

“The first time I didn’t like it because I thought I was the one who kissed badly and I didn’t tell my friends (...) it’s better for you to tell a pretty story and the conversation ends sooner.” (Nerea, 20)

In this vein, Nerea shares she felt that having a narrative that fits the mainstream line in sexual-affective relationships in their peer group was easier socially. Other participants also felt this need to conform to the norm and also identify sharing embellished narratives.

Regarding the second strategy, participants explain how often they were omitting or polishing details to fit into what was seen as normative in her group of friends:

“At first I had idealized it [the relationship] because I was ashamed to think about what the others [my friends] were going to think, I was not going to be less, it was bad to say that it had been shit.”
(Naroa, 18)

To Naroa, it was clear that it was better not to share the bad details. This was shared by the majority of the participants, who felt that the fact that everyone in their group is sharing a positive narrative of some sexual-affective relationships puts pressure of them to shape their own narratives in the same direction:

“In sex there have been things that have made me uncomfortable, with a boy (...) He was very excited and I was not so much and I told him to stop and I didn't like it. I didn't tell my friends about this until much later. (...) People must tell the good part and on top of that they exaggerate it. How are we supposed to tell the bad part?” (Idoia, 19)

In her interview, Idoia explained she felt it was hard to share with her friends the details of her sexual-affective relationships that did not fit the mainstream narrative of her group of friends. This feeling was also present in the interviews of most of the other participants. In this vein, Nerea explained:

“It's harder to share negatives details, it's easier to share what's beautiful, it's like you may be to blame, the relationship goes wrong... because you don't want to open up you live in a lie” (Nerea, 20)

Nerea does not only explain that what is shared regarding some sexual-affective relationships often includes only the details considered to be nice, but also acknowledges that by doing so one ends up believing their own lie. The acknowledgment of such self-told “lies”, which the girls refer to as “fake narratives”, is presented in detail in section 2.

Acknowledgment of the Narratives as False

The second result identified in the interviews with the participants is that they acknowledged being aware that what they were sharing with their peers regarding some of their sexual-affective relationships was untrue. More specifically, it is not only about the fact that their stories did not match what had happened in reality, but the fact that from the beginning, they were aware of the mismatch, and purposefully created it. That is why we talk about “fake narratives”, because the participants themselves identify these as such. In this sense, some explain that they recall some bad sexual-affective experiences, but they are aware that when sharing them with their peers, they completely reframed their narrative:

What happened in the car with this guy, I explained it to my friends and they were ‘wow you hooked up with [the guy]’...[I said] ‘yes he was hot, he had a great car,’ when in reality he was very ugly and had a shitty car. I was saying, ‘wow... it was amazing’, that’s what I was explaining, but actually, I think it sucked. (Ivet, 18)

In the interview, Ivet explains she was well aware that her narrative did not match what had happened in reality or how she felt in the hook-up. This is a reflection shared by the participants who acknowledge using fake narratives to recount some sexual-affective relationships. In Leire’s, she adds:

It’s not that I didn’t want to, but that I would have said I didn’t feel like it (...) many had found out and told me wow how cool, and I laughed and didn’t tell the truth (Leire, 18)

In Leire’s case, she was aware that her friends got a part of the story that led them to think it had been very cool, when she knew it was not true, but she did not want to put her story straight. Similarly, many participants explained having presented their own experiences in a way that will be better accepted by the group, as explained in the first section of the results. Nerea adds:

“Yes, in the end doing it in the shower, in the elevator, at the moment it’s not ‘wow’ but then you tell about it and ‘wow’. You enjoy talking about it more than doing it. For example, doing it in the car, I did it and it’s not a big deal, and you tell about it and everyone ‘wow’, and when you repeat it (and keep talking about it) it’s already awesome, and it wasn’t a big deal to start with” (Nerea, 20)

From Nerea’s recount one can see that she acknowledges that sharing it with her friends was actually the exciting part. In a similar way, participants also believe that their friends are not always telling the truth either:

“You also don’t know to what extent they are telling you the truth or not, because you haven’t been in the relationship, but you know that they put more emphasis than there was. Well, I don’t know, when it came to giving the details, they might have exaggerated

and made it prettier, when it came to tell they were hooking up they might have made it prettier or better than it had been. More than perfect, like in movies, no, more exciting!” (Carmen, 18)

Other participants also believe the narratives of their friends are not true. In this vein, Edurne adds:

“I don't know, it's been 3 years since they know each other and I think she does enjoy it [sex] but the fact that she says it so much makes me doubt what it really is, it seems that she is exaggerating a lot, it seems that they fuck every day and I know that it is not like that. (...) I've heard her talk about it three times, she exaggerates it. Each time she explained it in more detail, at first she didn't tell me almost any detail. The second time she talked about it she gave more details. Last time she told me something that she hadn't told me before.” (Edurne, 18)

In the case of Edurne, the fact that her friend is so adamant is what makes her doubt her story. As for Laia, she explains the following:

“A friend told me that she was with a boy all night, she told it to me with a lot of emotion (...) she told me that she would tell me something else and then she told me nothing and then I think it wasn't that pretty, I think she does it to convince herself, maybe it was cool, but if he didn't call her, maybe he took advantage. But she tells me it was awesome, that he will write to her. Maybe she thinks it was bad, because she got carried away and now she tries to convince herself.” (Laia, 18)

In this case, Laia identifies that, because of the development of the story, maybe her friend is not being completely sincere. In this sense, she believes her friend insists on her experience as being cool as a mechanism to convince herself.

Discussion

The aim of the current study is to identify and analyze the presence of fake narratives in the interactions girls have with their peers regarding disdainful sexual-affective relationships. In this vein, this research contributes two

main results: 1) how the content of fake narratives is built by exaggerating what happened and by omitting the negative details, and 2) the fact that the participants were aware from the beginning that they were sharing narratives that were fake.

Regarding the first point, the interviews with adolescent girls corroborate previous evidence that have shown that the CDD influences many girls to share with their friends or peers a different narrative than what they have experienced in disdainful hookups (Racionero-Plaza, Duque, et al., 2021; Torras-Gómez et al., 2019). In this sense, the current study provides more details on how these fake narratives are conveyed. On the one hand, all interviewees expressed that they tend to depict relationships under the CDD as wilder, more exciting and attractive than they actually felt them. This helps understand why many girls still remember coerced relationships as positive if they have not reconstructed the memories of such relationships (G. López de Aguilera et al., 2021; Racionero-Plaza, Ugalde, Merodio, et al., 2020; Racionero-Plaza, Ugalde, Vidu, et al., 2020). Although more research is needed to better understand why many girls feel they need to exaggerate some relationships, especially disdainful hookups, and tell their friends a different version from how they experienced them, some participants in the interviews pointed to peer pressure and image, which has also been found in previous studies (Chia & Lee, 2008; Racionero-Plaza, Duque, et al., 2021).

In addition to exaggerating the narratives about disdainful relationships, many interviewees stated that they tended to omit negative aspects of them, such as the disgust they felt towards the hookup and the boy. In this line, a participant in a previous study about fake narratives expressed that disdainful hookups felt like eating an expired yogurt, but that in spite of being aware of how she felt, she still felt the need to tell their friends it was hot and exciting (Torras-Gómez et al., 2019). In a similar vein, participants in Racionero and colleagues (2020), after learning about the CDD, were able to identify the negative aspects of violent sexual-affective relationships that they had removed from their memories.

The second result identified in the interviews with the participants is that they acknowledged being aware that what they were sharing with their peers regarding their disdainful sexual-affective relationships was untrue, while they suspect that their friends did the same. In this case, more than mismatches between their autobiographical memory and what happened

(Racionero-Plaza, Ugalde, Merodio, et al., 2020), what we identified is a consciousness and an acknowledgment of the fact that those narratives were false. Torras-Gómez and colleagues (2019) first identified such fake narratives and their link to disdainful hookups and relationships, which is also confirmed in the current study. In this line, we observe characteristics of the CDD in the participants' narratives (Joanpere et al., 2021; Rodrigues-Mello et al., 2021) leading them or their friends to engage in disdainful hookups (A. López de Aguilera et al., 2021). In such hookups, the participants identify a lack of pleasure, as well as the fact that they engage in behaviors that they do not want or enjoy, but accept under the CDD (A. López de Aguilera et al., 2021; Torras-Gómez et al., 2019).

Indeed, the awareness interviewees in the current study have shown regarding fake narratives is not new (Torras-Gómez et al., 2019). Nonetheless, such awareness had not been explored so in-depth until now, where interviewees have acknowledged that not only they themselves felt they were sharing a different version of reality, but that they also suspected their friends did the same. Although this does not mean by any means that girls always do what their friends do, when it comes to sexual-affective relationships, research has found that in many cases the interactions with peers foster and validate specific sexual (Morgan & Korobov, 2012), which can become normative in the group (van de Bongardt et al., 2017). In this sense, in many cases, teens end up having similar sexual behaviors to other members of their group (Prinstein et al., 2003). In the case of our study, this can explain why participants explain how them and their friends engage in sexual behaviors that they do not always like, but feel are aligned with those experiences of their friends. At the same time, having such behaviors and sharing them as exciting reinforces the pressures of the CDD, in line with research under the framework of the CDD (Racionero-Plaza, Puigvert, et al., 2021).

Some of the limitations of this study include the fact that participants are responding about themselves. Thus, it must be considered that some participants may have answered their questions trying to respond to what is socially expected from them. As well, this study was conducted with girls aged 18-21, focusing on their relationships during their adolescence. In this line, they are asked to talk about events in their past, so the malleability of autobiographical memories should also be considered.

It would be relevant for future research to delve into why adolescents engage in such behavior, to better understand through which mechanisms the CDD is acting. Moreover, it would be interesting to explore the role of peers' reactions on girls engaging in such behaviors and which characteristics do have protective relationships. Finally, future research should further explore the effects that sharing over and over such fake narratives has on pleasure.

Conclusions

The current study identifies and analyzes the presence of fake narratives in the interactions girls have with their peers regarding sexual-affective relationships. In this line, the results have shown the presence of such narratives about disdainful relationships, either from the participants or from their friends. More specifically, participants have explained that, in relationships with the characteristics of those under the CDD, girls often present as exciting experiences that they did not enjoy and omit or polish the negative details. In such instances, participants are aware that what they are sharing is not what really happened, thus acknowledging their narratives around disdainful relationships as fake. In this same line, they also believe that their friends engage in the same behavior, doubting that everything shared within the group on sexual-affective relationships is really true. As one of the participants says, “you enjoy talking about it more than doing it”. Such findings point to the lack of pleasure in disdainful relationships and the need to share narratives that conform to the group's norms, advancing knowledge on existing research on sex communication and shedding light on how such fake narrative emerge around disdainful relationships. By unveiling them, the current research contributes new knowledge that allows girls, who so desire, to have relationships based on freedom.

Notes

¹ The current research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Community of Researchers on Excellence for All (CREA) under reference number 20220623

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