THE MODERATING EFFECT OF SEXUAL ORIENTATION ON GENDER AND ROMANTIC LOVE MYTHS

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Summary. Today, the myths of romantic love are still present when it comes to establishing expectations regarding love relationships, which has been seen to entail a series of risks associated with gender and, although to a lesser extent, sexual orientation (ambivalent sexism, LGBTIphobia...). The objective of this research was to analyze whether sexual orientation exerts a moderating role on the relationship between gender and the internalization of these myths, as well as to know whether gender and sexual orientation influence their assimilation. A sample of 435 young adults between 18 and 35 years of age living in Spain was obtained. They responded to a questionnaire that included the aforementioned sociodemographic variables and the Romantic Love Myths Scale (RMLS). The results showed a moderating effect of sexual orientation on the relationship between gender and myth internalization. On the other hand, a significant correlation was observed between the latter two variables. It was also observed that men expressed significantly more myths than the other genders. Likewise, heterosexuals had significantly higher scores than bisexuals, and homosexuals had significantly higher scores than bisexuals. Finally, it was observed that the scores of heterosexual men were significantly higher compared to those of heterosexual women, bisexual women, bisexual men, and bisexual non-binary people. These results can be used to propose actions to prevent and intervene in the elimination of these myths from the collective imagination.

Keywords: romantic love, romantic myths, socialization, gender differences, sexual orientation differences.

EL EFECTO MODERADOR DE LA ORIENTACIÓN SEXUAL ENTRE EL GÉNERO Y LOS MITOS DE AMOR ROMÁNTICO

Resumen. Hoy por hoy los mitos del amor romántico continúan presentes a la hora de establecer expectativas respecto a las relaciones amorosas, lo cual se ha visto que entraña una serie de riesgos asociados al género y, aunque en menor medida, a la orientación sexual (sexismo ambivalente, LGBTIfobia…). El objetivo de esta investigación fue analizar si la orientación sexual ejerce un papel moderador sobre la relación entre el género y la interiorización de estos mitos, así como conocer si el género y la orientación sexual influyen en su asimilación. Se obtuvo una muestra de 435 personas jóvenesadultas residentes en España de entre 18 y 35 años. Estas respondieron a un cuestionario que incluía las variables sociodemográficas mencionadas y la Escala de Mitos de Amor Romántico (SMLR). Los resultados mostraron un efecto moderador por parte de la orientación sexual en la relación entre género e interiorización de mitos. Por otra parte, se observó una correlación significativa entre estas últimas dos

variables. También se observó que los hombres manifestaron significativamente más mitos que el resto de géneros. Asimismo, las personas heterosexuales presentaron puntuaciones significativamente mayores en comparación a las bisexuales; y a su vez, las personas homosexuales obtuvieron puntuaciones significativamente mayores que el colectivo bisexual. Por último, se observó que las puntuaciones de los hombres heterosexuales fueron significativamente más altas en comparación con las de las mujeres heterosexuales, mujeres bisexuales, hombres bisexuales y personas no binarias bisexuales. Estos resultados pueden servir para plantear llevar a cabo actuaciones que prevengan e intervengan sobre la eliminación de estos mitos del imaginario colectivo.

Palabras clave: amor romántico, mitos románticos, socialización, diferencias de género, diferencias de orientación sexual.

Introduction

Love, widely studied by numerous disciplines over the decades, has evolved in its conception. It is a social construct that is influenced by the historical and cultural context in which it is situated, varying both its meaning and its implications (Bonilla and Rivas, 2018; Fernández et al., 2019; Resurrección and Córdoba, 2019). In other words, it is a multidimensional phenomenon that depends on numerous agents (Bonilla and Rivas, 2018).

Countless authors have tried to construct a theoretical approach, but there are two dominant frameworks in the literature. On the one hand, Lee (1973, cited in Fernández et al., 2021) speaks of 6 archetypes that make up love. There are the three main ones: Eros (passionate romantic love), Ludus (love as play) and Storge (companionate love); and the three secondary: Pragma (practical love, composed of Ludus and Storge), Mania (possessive love, composed of Eros and Ludus) and Agape (altruistic love, composed of Eros and Storge) (Resurrection and Cordoba, 2019). On the other hand, there is a more recent theory by Stenberg (1986, cited in Fernández et al., 2021): the Triangular Theory of Love. It suggests that love is compressed into three dimensions: intimacy, passion and commitment. The various combinations of these components give rise to the different forms of love such as empty love, fatuous love, consummate love... It can be seen that both theories coincide in that there is a style of love that is characterized by being intimate, passionate, irrational, euphoric, with an excessive focus on the other person... in addition to an important component of attraction (Fernández et al., 2021; Quintard, 2020). It is this ideology that today is accepted by a large part of society as a model for love relationships and from which a series of myths derive (Bonilla and Rivas, 2020; Resurrección and Córdoba, 2019).

Romantic love myths are defined as a set of socially shared and accepted biased and irrational beliefs about the supposed "true" nature of love (Bonilla, 2018; Bonilla et al., 2021; Bosch, Herrezuelo, & Ferrer, 2019; Carrascosa et al., 2019; Fernández et al., 2021). They are formulated as absolute and inflexible truths (Bonilla et al., 2021) that guide feelings, thoughts, interpretations and behaviors related to love (Bonilla and Rivas, 2020); a normative and legitimate way of relating to each other (Cubbels and Casamiglia, 2015). These arise in the West in the 19th century (Resurrección and Córdoba, 2019) with the purpose of imposing a specific model of loving relationship (Bonilla et al., 2021; Resurrección and Córdoba, 2019), consequently encouraging the rejection of any other model that departs from this norm (Bonilla and Rivas, 2020). Thus, these dictate that romantic love is to be monogamous, heterosexual (Bosch et al., 2019; Fernández et al., 2021; Thorne et al., 2019), patriarchal (Cubells and Casamiglia, 2015; Resurrección and Córdoba, 2019), and sexist (Thorne et al., 2019). In other words, these are the reflection of the confluence between the normative legacy of the cultural tradition and the socio-politico-economic conditions of the present day. All this, in addition to shaping the collective imaginary of Western culture with respect to love, exerts pressure for it to be digested (Bonilla and Rivas, 2020).

Many authors have collected the most common myths (Bonilla and Rivas, 2020; Fernández et al, 2021; Yela 2003, cited in Resurrección and Córdoba 2019): myth of the pairing or couple (having a partner is intrinsic to human nature, one cannot be completely happy without it; moreover, heterosexual monogamy is the natural and universal type of relationship); myth of the better half (the partner we choose was predestined, so there is a strong emotional dependence and a great effort is made because the relationship continues despite the difficulties); myth of eternal passion (the passion of the beginning has to last during

the myth of free will (our feelings are not influenced by biological, cultural or social factors); the myth of omnipotence (love can handle everything and is enough to solve problems and justify behavior); the myth of equivalence (love (feeling) and falling in love (passing state) are the same thing); myth of fidelity (passionate and romantic desires can only be satisfied with a partner); myth of exclusivity (one cannot love more than one person at the same time); myth of jealousy (it is an indispensable requirement to demonstrate that one really loves the other person and is used to justify repressive and selfish behaviors) and myth of marriage (love has to lead to stable union or cohabitation through marriage). However, authors such as Bonilla and Rivas (2020) add others, such as the myth of abnegation (love implies unconditional surrender, having to make sacrifices and prioritize the well-being of the other person) or the myth of ambivalence or love-violence compatibility (love and abuse are compatible in a couple relationship). Different studies conducted in Spain support that the most common are those referring to eternal passion (Bonilla et al., 2021), jealousy, omnipotence and the better half (Bonilla and Rivas, 2018; Bonilla et al., 2021; Ruiz et al., 2021).

The presence of these ideas has been studied especially in adolescents, as this is a stage that is usually accompanied by the exploration of romantic relationships and, with it, the construction of the representation of love (Bisquert et al., 2019; Masanet and Dhaenens, 2019). It has been investigated both worldwide and in Spanish resident population (Bisquert et al., 2019; Bonilla and Rivas, 2018; Bonilla et al., 2021; Bosch et al., 2019; Fernandez et al., 2021; Masanet and Dhaenens, 2019; Thorne et al., 2021). However, several studies speak of the validity of this discourse in the general population (Bonilla and Rivas, 2018), and more specifically in the adult population (Rodríguez et al., 2013); despite the fact that it decreases with age according to some authors (Fernández et al., 2021). Even so, this presence is not surprising given the culture in which today's young adult population has developed. A clear example is the entertainment industry (Resurrección and Córdoba, 2019). This was based (and continues to be partly based) on television series such as "Física o química" (among others, but this was very relevant at the time) (Fernández et al., 2021; Masanet and Dhaenens, 2019), movies or books (Fernández et al., 2021; Masanet and Dhaenens, 2019; Resurrección and Córdoba, 2019) where love models that reproduce the romantic ideal coated with fantasy are exhibited (Resurrección and Córdoba, 2019). In addition to this, new technologies provide easy access and communication facilities to the exposure of certain content that also leads to inappropriate models, such as pornography (Bonilla et al., 2021). All of these influences may have created (and continue to do so) unrealistic expectations about what a couple is to be like (Bosch et al., 2019; Fernandez et al., 2021). Although research has been conducted in Spain where this young adult population is covered (Bosch et al., 2019; Cubbels and Casamiglia, 2015; Fernandez et al., 2021), these also include adolescents or make use of ad hoc questionnaires. Therefore, it would be relevant to evaluate this part of the population specifically and thus verify the presence of these myths by means of a quantitative and validated instrument.

Thus, these myths carry significant risk in multiple areas (Bonilla, 2018). One of the most examined conditions is their gendered internalization (Bosch et al., 2019; Calvo, 2017; De Meyer et al., 2017; Fernández et al., 2021; Tenorio, 2012), as most studies have found differences between women and men in the acceptance of these myths (Bonilla and Rivas, 2018; Rodríguez et al., 2013;

Rodríguez et al., 2015); therefore, their experience is not neutral (Bonilla and Rivas, 2020). Research points out that men have a greater distortion of romantic love with respect to women, both in adolescent and adult populations (Bonilla & Rivas, 2018; Bonilla & Rivas, 2021; Fernández et al., 2021). They have also been observed in samples such as that of Bonilla et al. (2021) the differences between the two. These point out that men present higher scores in the myth of the compatibility of love with violence (Bisquert et al., 2019; Resurrección and Córdoba, 2021), jealousy and matching (Bisquert et al., 2019); while women do so in the myth of the better half, the omnipotence of love (Bisquert et al., 2019; Resurrección and Córdoba, 2021) and eternal passion. All of these are compatible with this acceptance of intimate partner violence (Resurrección and Córdoba, 2021).

This last fact is relevant, since several studies support the fact that these myths configure a substantial symbolic mechanism that, in an invisible and prolonged manner, produces and reproduces the power relations traditionally constructed by patriarchal societies (Bonilla and Rivas, 2020). Since love is a social construct, it is not inherent to the differential socialization still in place that gives rise to inequalities between men and women (Bosch et al., 2019; Resurrección and Córdoba, 2021). This leads to making people specifically and naturalized, but mostly implicitly, into men or women, both socially and individually. It implies a subordinate gender identity for women (Bosch et al., 2019; Resurrección and Córdoba, 2021) and a dominance role for men (Bonilla et al., 2021; Carbonell et al., 2021; Resurrección and Córdoba, 2021); and it is that romantic love myths have been found to be related to ambivalent sexism (Bonilla and Rivas, 2018; Bonilla and Rivas, 2020; Fernández et al., 2019; Resurrección and Córdoba, 2021). This concept allows us to see the coexistence of benevolent (subtle) and hostile (overt) attitudes directed towards women (Bonilla et al., 2021), entering into this second category the appearance and/or maintenance of intimate partner violence by justifying and condoning behaviors produced by an impossible relationship model (Bonilla and Rivas, 2019; Bonilla and Rivas, 2020; Cubells and Casamiglia, 2015; Fernández et al., 2021; Resurrección and Córdoba, 2021; Víllora et al., 2019). However, the literature seems to be limited to the analysis of this linkage from a binary gender perspective. According to the report "Youth in Spain", prepared by the National Youth Institute, one in four young people in Spain does not identify, or at least not strictly, with the female or male category (Ministry of Social Rights and Agenda 2030, 2020). Therefore, it is important to include people from the entire gender spectrum in order to have an accurate representation of the population to be investigated.

The possible relationship of sexual orientation with the assimilation of these myths has also been studied, although to a lesser extent. The research by Thorne et al. (2021), which reviewed four studies, observed in which contexts the participants, depending on their sexual orientation, did not conceptualize romantic love as heterosexual. The results showed that although heterosexuals, unlike homosexuals and bisexuals (LG and B from now on), were able to link the characteristics of romantic love to different partner models independently of their gender (in fact, some declined to remain in the study when asked to conceive of this; moreover, they had to make an effort to take all models into account), under certain conditions they did show a tendency to attach different love concepts to specific sexual orientations. In fact, these participants were the first

whose conception of love coincided with that which was proper to their sexual orientation.

These results show that the degree to which heterosexuality is established as the default norm for romantic relationships may be influenced by belonging to this sexual orientation (Thorne et al., 2019; Thorne et al., 2021). As noted, the current model of love dictates that love must be a certain way. It has been observed that the "norm" of heterosexuality could be mediated by this factor, but it seems that the different conditions of this sociodemographic variable can explain a large part of the construction of this love scheme. For example, studies such as those by Rubin et al. (2014) or Sizemore and Olmstead (2018) found that sexual minority individuals showed greater openness to having consensual nonmonogamous relationships. These sexist beliefs have not been explored much in LGB people. However, a study conducted with nearly twenty thousand participants showed that heterosexual people showed significantly higher levels of both benevolent and hostile sexism compared to LG people, with the latter also scoring significantly higher than B people (Cowie et al., 2019). And as already referred to, the greater the acceptance of myths, the greater the sexism (Rodriguez et al., 2013; Rodriguez et al. 2015). However, the differences between G and L persons were not explored, nor does it appear to have been done in the literature.

Despite the scarce literature, it does point out that the greater the acceptance of these normative concepts of heterosexuality, monogamy, sexism, etc., the greater the internalization of the romantic love model that supports them. Differences are observed not only between LGB and heterosexual groups, but also between the four sexual orientations. However, as with people of non-binary gender, the literature has not contemplated the inclusion of asexual people in its samples, again leaving out a part of the general population. Thus, inclusion of this condition is necessary, as it is yet another sexual orientation (Gupta, 2018; Hille et al., 2019).

In summary, the literature supports that this discourse continues to be very present in the younger generations with the consequent negative effects that it entails. This has largely demonstrated the relationship between myth assimilation and (binary) gender, but sexual orientation could play a moderating role in this relationship. In Spain there are several programs for adolescents and adult women that try to banish these myths (Resurrección and Córdoba, 2019), but the role that the young adult generation can play in the reproduction and maintenance of their consequences is noteworthy. At this stage, the foundations of the love scheme continue to be built. It is experienced through the establishment of different relationships that are maintained for one time or another, that change their conditions, that end... without forgetting that in many cases there is also the conception and education of future generations. Moreover, love is important in people's lives, and a very powerful phenomenon. Neuropsychological studies with neuroimaging have demonstrated the linkage of romantic love with the activation of the reward and motivation areas of the brain, and it is well known that these systems have a great influence on people's thoughts and social life (Quintard et al., 2020). Therefore, an investigation of this young adult population is proposed to verify whether these irrational beliefs are present in a significant way according to certain sociodemographic characteristics. The purpose is to determine the target population to which prevention and intervention programs should be directed.

Therefore, the main objective of the present research is to analyze the role of sexual orientation as a moderating variable between gender and the internalization of romantic love myths in young adults (18-35 years old) living in Spain. However, we also study: a) whether there is a correlation between gender and the presence of romantic love myths; b) the specific differences with respect to this assimilation to a greater or lesser extent depending on the gender and sexual orientation of the person. The presence of these myths in non-binary gender and asexual people is also explored.

The following hypotheses (H from now on) are put forward:

H1: Sexual orientation significantly moderates the relationship between gender and the internalization of romantic love myths.

H2: Gender will significantly predict the internalization of romantic love myths.

H3: Men will present significantly more romantic love myths than women.

H4: Heterosexual people will show significantly more romantic love myths than LGBA people.

H5: Heterosexual men will present significantly more romantic love myths than the rest.

H6: LG people will show significantly more romantic love myths than B people.

H7: G men will present significantly more romantic love myths than L women.

Method

Design

This is an exploratory type of research, with a mixed methodology. It is of observational type with a cross-sectional study.

Participants

The sample is made up of 435 people. Data were collected through nonrandom snowball sampling in the general population. The requirements to participate in the study were to be between 18 and 35 years of age and to reside in Spain. Of the total number of participants, 303 (69.7%) are women, 120 (27.6%) are men and 12 (2.8%) are women non-binary people. In addition, 231 (53.1%) are heterosexuals, 150 (34.5%) are heterosexuals, and 150 (34.5%) are heterosexuals

bisexuals, 37 (8.5%) homosexuals and 17 (3.9%) asexuals. Both sociodemographic variables are represented in Figure 1 and summarized in Table 1

1. All individuals participated on a voluntary basis and did not receive any type of compensation.
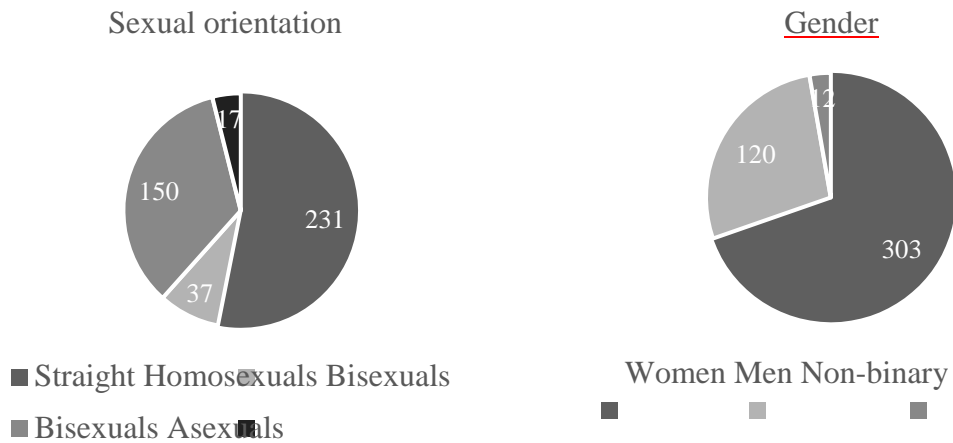
Figure 1

Sample distribution

Table 1

Sociodemographic characteristics of the sample

Genre	Sexual Orientation	Media	Standard deviation	N
	Straight	19,44	5,32	160
	Homosexual	21,71	6,22	17
Woman	Bisexual	17,98	4,59	117
	Asexual	18,44	4,25	9
	Total	18,97	5,15	303
	Straight	24,58	5,48	71
	Homosexual	21,35	6,83	20
Man	Bisexual	19,31	5,59	26
	Asexual	20,00	3,61	3
	Total	22,78	6,08	120
	Bisexual	17,43	5,00	7
Non-binary	Asexual	19,00	7,04	5
	Total	18,08	5,68	12
	Straight	21,02	5,86	231
	Homosexual	21,51	6,47	37
Total	Bisexual	18,19	4,79	150
	Asexual	18,88	4,83	17
	Total	20,00	5,69	435

Instrument

The Romantic Love Myths Scale (RMLS) is composed of 11 items that measure the acceptance of romantic love myths. It has a Likert-type response format with 5 alternatives (1, completely disagree; 2, disagree; 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; and 5, completely agree) and its application is individual. All items have a direct relationship, so higher scores imply a higher level of agreement. The myths can be measured independently based on their indicators or jointly through the total score, with a maximum score of 55. The scale has shown adequate reliability indices, with a Cronbach's alpha above ,70 (Bonilla and Rivas, 2020; Bonilla and Rivas, 2021).

Procedure and variables studied

Dissemination of the ad hoc questionnaire was carried out on social networks*(Whatsapp, Instagram* and *Twitter* specifically) through *Google Forms,* using snowball sampling. This questionnaire included: an informed consent that protected the rights and privacy, as well as voluntary participation, anonymity of response and confidentiality of the information provided by the participants; sociodemographic data of interest such as gender (predictor variable), sexual orientation (moderator variable) and age (the latter for the sole purpose of avoiding the filtration of subjects who do not fall within the target age range); and the SMLR scale (dependent variable).

Data analysis

Data analysis was carried out using the *IBM SPSS Statistics 22*statistical software. First, the basic descriptive statistics (mean, standard deviation, variance, skewness and kurtosis) were obtained. Similarly, tests were performed to check the normality assumption and the homoscedasticity assumption.

A Correlation Analysis (Spearman's Rho) was then performed to examine the association between the predictor and dependent variable. An Analysis of Variance was then performed to evaluate the differences of the predictor and moderator variable on the dependent variable, both together and separately. A post-hoc test was also carried out to verify the relevant comparisons. Bonferroni was also obtained to test whether these differences were significant.

Finally, Regression Analysis was performed to test the moderation relationship for the dependent variable, as well as a separate analysis of the effect of each variable. This was carried out using the *Process*program.

Results

Regarding the descriptive statistics (Table 5), as can be seen, the skewness coefficients show positive skewness, being specifically high in the case of gender (<1.00). Therefore, there are mostly low scores. At the same time, the kurtosis coefficients indicate a high skewness in gender and SMLR (leptokurtic distribution), while the distribution of sexual orientation is very flat (platykurtic distribution). This implies that the normal distribution of the variables cannot be assumed. However, the coefficients of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov normality test (Tables 2 and 3) specifically indicate that all of these tests were performed in the same way

the variable categories have a normal distribution except for women (p<.001), heterosexuals (p=.20) and bisexuals (p=.20). On the other hand, Levene's statistic (Table 4) indicates that the homoscedasticity assumption is met (p=.30).

Table 2

Normality test for sexual orientation

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
	Sexual Orientation	Statistician	gl	Sig.
SMLR	Straight	,09	231	,00***
	Homosexual	,07	37	,20
	Bisexual	,12	150	,00***
	Asexual	,10	17	,20

Note. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

Table 3

Normality test for gender

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov		
	Genre	Statistician	gl	Sig.
SMLR	Woman	,11	303	,00***
	Man	,08	120	,06
	Non-binary	,18	12	,20

Note. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

Table 4

Homogeneity of variances test

SMLR			
Levene's statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
1,188	9	425	,30

Note. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

Table 5

Descriptive statistics of the variables

	N	Media	Standard deviation	Variance	Asymmetry		Kurtosis	
	Statistician	Statistician	Statistician	Statistician	Statistician	Standard error	Statistician	Standard error
SMLR	435	20,00	5,69	32,36	,67	,12	,06	,23
Sexual Orientation	435	1,89	1,01	1,02	,45	,12	-1,44	,23
Genre	435	1,33	0,53	,28	1,28	,12	,65	,23
N valid (per list)	435							

Correlation Analysis (Table 6), from Spearman's correlation coefficient, indicates a positive, although weak, association between gender and romantic love myths (ρ=.25, p<.001).

Table 6

Correlation analysis between gender and SMLR

			Genre	SMLR
Rho of Spearman	Genre	Correlation coefficient	1,00	,26
		Sig. (bilateral)	.	,00***
		N	435	435
	SMLR	Correlation coefficient	,26	1,00
		Sig. (bilateral)	,00***	.
		N	435	435

Note. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001.

Regarding the Analysis of Variance, the Bonferroni correction (Table 7) indicates that both the differences in the different genders (F=21.89, p<.001) and sexual orientations (F=21.90, p<..001) as well as in the combination of both variables that form groups representing the ten possible conditions of the participants (F=9.12, p<.001) are statistically significant.

Table 7

Bonferroni correction between groups

	Sum of squares	gl	Root mean square	F	Sig.
Between groups	2185,78	9	242,86	8,70	,00***
Within groups	11860,22	425	27,91		
Total	14046,00	434			

Note. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

Thus, analyzing the variables separately, it is seen that first (Table 8) that men (X=21.31) obtained higher scores on the SMLR than women (X=19.39), and these in turn showed higher scores than those of non-binary persons (X=18.21). Regarding sexual orientation (Table 9), the results indicate that heterosexuals (X=22.01) have higher scores on the SMLR than homosexuals (X=21.53), asexuals (X=19.15) and bisexuals (X=18.24). However, these mean differences were only significant for men with respect to women (p<.001) in the case of gender, and for heterosexuals with respect to bisexuals (p<.001), and for the latter in comparison to homosexuals (p=.03). Relative to the mean scores obtained in the ten resulting groups (Table 1) the following scores on the SMLR are observed in order from highest to lowest: heterosexual men (X=24.58), homosexual women (X= 21.71), homosexual men (X=21.35), asexual men (X=20), heterosexual women (X=19.44), bisexual men (X=19.31), asexual non-binary people (X=19), asexual women (X=18.44), bisexual women (X=19.31) and bisexual non-binary people (X=17.43). In relation to

a differences in scores between the different groups were only statistically significant for heterosexual men compared to heterosexual women (p<.001), bisexual women (p<.001), bisexual men (p=.001) and bisexual non-binary people (p=.03).

Table 8

Average scores by gender

Genre	Media	Standard error	Lower limit	Upper limit
Woman	19,39	,57	18,28	20,51
Man	21,31	,87	19,60	23,02
Non-binary	18,21	1,55	15,17	21,25

Table 9

Mean scores by sexual orientation

Sexual Orientation	Media	Standard error	Lower limit	Upper limit
Straight	22,01	,38	21,27	22,75
Homosexual	21,53	,87	19,82	23,24
Bisexual	18,24	,77	16,73	19,75
Asexual	19,15	1,41	16,37	21,93

Table 10

Post hoc test for multiple comparisons in gender

(I) Gender	(J) Gender	Difference of means (I-J)	Standard error	Sig.	Lower limit	Upper limit
Woman	Man	-3,81	,63	,00***	-5,33	-2,29
	Non-binary	,89	1,67	,94	-3,74	5,52
Man	Woman	3,81	,63	,00***	2,29	5,33
	Non-binary	4,70	1,73	,05	-,01	9,41
Non-binary	Woman	-,89	1,67	,94	-5,52	3,74
	Men	-4,70	1,73	,05	-9,41	,01

Note. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

Table 11

Post hoc test for multiple comparisons in sexual orientation

(I) Sexual orientation	(J) Sexual orientation	Difference of means (I-J)	Standard error	Sig.	Lower limit	Upper limit
	Homosexual	-,50	1,13	1,00	-3,61	2,61
Straight	Bisexual	2,83	,55	,00***	1,38	4,28
	Asexual	2,14	1,23	,47	-1,47	5,74
	Straight	,50	1,13	1,00	-2,61	3,61
Homosexual	Bisexual	3,33	1,13	,03*	,21	6,44
	Asexual	2,63	1,58	,483	-1,74	7,01
	Straight	-2,83	,55	,00***	-4,28	-1,38
Bisexual	Homosexual	-3,33	1,13	,03*	-6,44	-,21
	Asexual	-,70	1,24	,99	-4,31	2,92
	Straight	-2,13	1,23	,47	-5,74	1,47
Asexual	Homosexual	-2,63	1,58	,48	-7,01	1,74
	Bisexual	,70	1,24	,99	-2,92	4,31

Note. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001º.

Finally, the Regression Analysis (Table 11) shows, on the one hand, significant values in the interaction between the independent and moderator variable (β= -1.76, p<.001), indicating the presence of a moderation effect. Thus, sexual orientation interferes with the effect of gender on the internalization of romantic love myths. On the other hand, this analysis also supports that gender significantly influences a higher score on the SMLR (β= 6.42, p<.001), coinciding with previous results. It also reveals that sexual orientation alone would not explain it (β= 1.11, p=.08).

Table 12

Regression analysis: effects of variables and moderation of these variables on the SMLR.

	β	t	Sig.	LLCI	ULCI
Genre	6,42	5,97	,00***	4,31	8,53
Sexual Orientation	1,11	1,73	,08	-,15	2,36
Interaction between gender and orientation sexual	-1,76	-4,08	,00***	-2,61	-,91

Note. *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

Discussion and conclusions

The present research had one main objective and two secondary objectives. First, to analyze whether sexual orientation plays a moderating role between gender and the internalization of romantic love myths in young adults. Secondly, to check if there is a correlation between gender and the presence of myths, and the differences according to gender and sexual orientation when it comes to having myths to a greater or lesser extent. In accordance with these objectives, different hypotheses were proposed and will be contrasted below.

First, the data confirm H1. As mentioned above, the study of the possible direct effect of sexual orientation on myths has been practically nil. However, there are numerous investigations that speak of this sociodemographic variable giving rise to differences in various aspects of people's lives; specifically in this field, its influence has been observed in the formation of ideas and/or behaviors that favor the emergence and maintenance of these myths (such as the rejection of consensual non-monogamous relationships or of sexism) (Rubin et al., 2014; Sizemore and Olmstead, 2018). After all, love is a social construct that stems directly from differential socialization. Thus, the research shows that sexual orientation exerts a moderating effect on the relationship between gender and myth assimilation.

H2 had indeed been previously verified by other research (Bonilla and Rivas, 2018; Rodriguez et al., 2013; Rodriguez et al., 2015), and this study has been no less by endorsing the strong genericization of this phenomenon. Thus, it can be observed how these myths are constructed based on the roles of

gender and therefore the socialization of people influences the acquisition of these to a greater or lesser extent (Bonilla and Rivas, 2018). In addition, this research includes the non-binary population, which has not been previously studied and which, therefore, gains in representativeness with respect to the general population.

The H3 is also confirmed. This assumption has also been, like the previous one, tested by some research with adolescent and adult population with Spanish sample (Bonilla and Rivas, 2018; Bonilla and Rivas, 2021; Fernández et al., 2021; Martínez and Paterna, 2013). However, there is hardly any literature on the young adult population in particular, so this is an appreciable finding in this field. Thus, this fact implies a greater normalization of the maintenance of the so-called masculine ideology in men, and, therefore, the denial of the difference between genders and the consequent inequality in couples (Bisquert et al., 2019). This ideology is based on a set of masculine standards that are defined based on norms related to toughness, achieving status and anti-femininity (Martinez and Paterna, 2013). There are so many other forms of masculinity, only this one is treated as hegemonic. Thus, it requires consecutively seeking validation of manhood, because otherwise one runs the risk of being considered "less of a man". This is why many men upon seeing their gender identity threatened turn to this traditional model as a form of response (Scaptura and Boyle, 2019). This same reaction would also be contributed to by feminist movements and the gender equality revolution (Bisquert et al., 2019; Martinez and Paterna, 2013), which, being contrary to the aforementioned values, would generate greater resistance from them (Farci and Righetti, 2019; Scaptura and Boyle, 2019). The result of this is called neosexism, which evidences the conflict of assuming the theoretical implications of equality and rejecting its practical application for fear of changing the status quo. In this way, male dominance can continue to be used (Martínez and Paterna, 2013). The same is supported by the studies of Bonilla and Rivas (2020) directly in the field of study, as they add the myth of love-violence compatibility and find that it is greater in men; or as the numerous studies that evidence a greater presence in these of myths such as jealousy that are directly related to behaviors of power, control and domination over women (Bisquert et al., 2019).

H4 is partially confirmed. This result is in agreement with the literature (Thorne et al. 2021), but like other hypotheses this topic has not been investigated much. It is observed that in the heterosexual group the internalization of myths is significant only in comparison to the bisexual group. One of the characteristics of romantic love is that it is heterosexual (Bosch et al., 2019; Fernández et al., 2021; Thorne et al., 2019), which is why the most basic explanation may be that people have more internalized a model that according to society represents them. Evidence shows that this collective has a greater rejection (compared to the LGBA collective) towards those values, attitudes or behaviors incompatible with the myths, such as non-monogamy or gender equality (Rubin et al., 2014; Sizemore and Olmstead, 2018). Furthermore, this same fact also occurred in the study by Thorne et al. (2021). Likewise, the opposing groups are faced with a society that considers that any relationship that transgresses this model is "unnatural", "exceptional" and "not ideal"; it would not be surprising then that the LGBA group shows a greater rejection. The possible explanation for the non-significant differences with the L and G collective will be addressed in H6.

H5 is also partially confirmed. This comes from the association that, if within gender men are the ones who show more myths and within sexual orientation heterosexual people, the presence of both conditions could be summative. Thus, the results indicate that the differences were significant only in comparison with heterosexual women, bisexual women, bisexual men and bisexual non-binary people. The possible explanation for the non-significant difference with homosexual women and homosexual men will be further explored in H6. As for the rest of the groups, as has already been pointed out at the beginning of the research, there is no literature on the degree of presence of myths in non-binary and asexual people, but the explanation that could be given is the one used in the previous hypothesis; they are people who are outside the norm of this model, so it may be logical that they feel a greater rejection for it.

On the other hand, the H6 is confirmed. Studies speak of how the *queer* community has generated an "adaptation" of heteronormativity to part of the collective, so that it has come to create a policy that privileges those who are attracted to the same gender. This is called "homonormativity", and its values are consistent with heteronormativity, as there is gender conformity, monogamy and family orientation. Bisexual people would be left out as there is no preference for one gender or the other, as it is seen as a combination of "instability" and "confusion" (Pollit et al., 2019), characteristics that do not fit the norm. It is known that because of this fact the collective suffers greater discrimination than other sexual minorities, both by the LGBT community itself and by the heterosexual (Arriaga and Parent, 2019; Bridge et al., 2019). Therefore, it can be theorized that LG people may have more romantic love myths than bisexual people by belonging to a norm whose values coincide with the general social pattern; and therefore, this in turn with the romantic love model (Bosch et al., 2019; Fernandez et al., 2021; Thorne et al., 2019).

The H7 has not been accepted. This hypothesis was put into play given that there is no literature exploring the differences between L and G individuals. However, as noted above men tend to have more myths than women, then it could be expected that this would be repeated when comparing these two groups (Bonilla and Rivas, 2018; Fernandez et al., 2021; Martinez and Paterna, 2013). However, the data reveal that the differences are minimal. Therefore, the only thing that could be concluded is that in this case gender would not have as much weight as sexual orientation.

On another front, this research has given rise to a number of theoretical and practical implications. Firstly, at a theoretical level it is relevant (in the absence of specific or recent research) to have obtained data regarding the presence of these myths in the general young adult population residing in Spain and, therefore, their expectations regarding romantic relationships. On the other hand, the influence of sexual orientation on the internalization of these myths has been explored for the first time (at least directly). We have also included representation of the non-binary and asexual population that is so rarely considered in general population studies. We have also made use of a tool that is showing promising results in measuring the internalization of these myths. Finally, further evidence has been provided regarding the influence of differential socialization and, consequently, the presence that the associated traditional values still maintain today. Secondly, at the practical level, the

the results warn of the need to develop programs that have an impact on the elimination of this conception of romantic love, since it has been shown that these beliefs are maintained in adulthood and the specific groups on which action must be taken have also been identified. In Spain, actions aimed at adolescents and women who have suffered gender violence have already been carried out (Resurrección and Córdoba, 2019), but it would be interesting to be able to also create both prevention and intervention campaigns aimed at preventing the appearance of the problem, so that action is not only taken when it already exists. This of course requires a change in the foundations of the culture, but carrying out this type of actions could help this very thing.

In addition, the limitations of this research must be taken into account. First, there are those related to the sample itself. The participating subjects have shown, on the whole, few romantic love myths, which could have a double explanation. On the one hand, as the literature states, although these myths are maintained, they diminish with age (Fernández, 2021). On the other hand, the composition of the sample itself, almost 70% of which was made up of women, could call into question the representativeness of the sample. Regarding the presence of non-binary and asexual people in the sample, their representation in the general population seems to be adequate, but when compared with the rest of the groups, the size is too small. The same is true for several groups, to a greater or lesser extent, and this must be taken into account when interpreting the results. It should also be noted that although statistically insignificant, the differences between men and people of non-binary gender, and heterosexual men and asexual women were borderline ($p=.05$).

On the other hand, having been launched through social networks, there may be an overrepresentation of people who are more aware of the deconstruction of traditional gender roles given the great movement that exists through these media. Other biases should also be taken into account, such as social desirability or selection bias; since this is a research with voluntary participation, the data collected come from people who are willing to answer questionnaires and/or are aware of the cause. Also, with regard to this last bias, the survey is aimed at "persons residing in Spain", but it is not possible to control whether they have lived in the country for a long time, for a few months, or for years. Therefore, the possibility of cultural factors from another country or countries having an influence has also not been controlled for. In the same way, there may be many other variables that have not been controlled and that intervene (religion, social status, occupation, schooling...). However, the veracity of this is questioned by the fact that such a large sample size has been achieved, which has allowed this type of multivariate analysis to be performed.

Therefore, future research is urged to confirm these results by controlling for all these biases that may have affected the representation of the general population; to investigate further the factors that generate and maintain romantic love myths; to explore more about the role of sexual orientation in the internalization of these myths; and to study in greater depth the populations that we have tried to explore but have not succeeded in doing so.

In short, despite the reduction of romantic love myths in the young adult population compared to the adolescent population, their persistence continues to pose a risk when it comes to triggering thoughts and behaviors that hinder people's social interaction and even violence.

Given these results, it would be advisable to design and implement prevention and intervention programs in the relevant populations to progressively modify the deep-rooted cultural bases that drive these beliefs, but which are increasingly flexible. We can show the advantages of other models such as new masculinities, create an alternative socialization that allows gender equality, educate in sexual diversity... In short, create a structure that allows living in a more respectful and inclusive society with all the realities that compose it.

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