BASES PSICOLÓGICAS DE LA JUSTIFICACIÓN DEL SISTEMA ECONÓMICO: UN ANÁLISIS DE CLASES LATENTES

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Resumen: La teoría de la justificación del sistema (ESJ) indica que los individuos poseen una motivación para justificar los sistemas sociales a los que pertenecen. La aproximación a este fenómeno permite investigar características de personalidad asociadas a la ESJ. Diferencias individuales como la orientación a la dominación social (SDO) y el autoritarismo de derechas (RWA) pueden constituir la base de la justificación. Aunque se han producido numerosos avances en el estudio del ESJ, la investigación sobre este tipo de relación no tiene precedentes en el contexto Argentino. El objetivo fue analizar si el SDO y el RWA se relacionan con el ESJ. El estudio contó con una muestra de 843 participantes (51,8 % mujeres; 48,2 % hombres), con un rango de edad de 18 a 88 años (M = 46,03; DE = 15,88). Los resultados indican que RWA y SDO se asocian positivamente con ESJ a través del Análisis de Clases Latentes. Por lo tanto, el RWA y el SDO pueden presentarse como la base psicológica sobre la que se sustenta el ESJ.

Palabras Clave: Justificación del sistema económico; Orientación de dominancia social; Autoritarismo de ala derecha; Bases psicológicas; Análisis de clases latentes.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL BASES OF ECONOMIC SYSTEM JUSTIFICATION: A LATENT CLASS ANALYSIS

Abstract: The theory of the system justification (ESJ) indicates that individuals possess a motivation to justify the social systems to which they belong. The approach to this phenomenon enables to investigate personality characteristics associated with the ESJ. Individual differences such as social dominance orientation (SDO) and right wing authoritarianism (RWA) can constitute the basis of justification. Although there have been numerous advances in the study of the ESJ, research on this type of relationship is unprecedented in the Argentinian context. The objective was to analyze whether SDO and RWA relates to ESJ. The study has a sample of 843 participants (51.8% female; 48.2% male), with an age range of 18 to 88 years (M = 46.03; SD = 15.88). Results indicate that RWA and SDO are positively associated with ESJ through Latent Class Analysis. Therefore, RWA and SDO may be presented as the psychological basis on which ESJ is sustained.

Keyword: Economic system justification; Social dominance orientation; Right-Wing Authoritarianism; Psychological bases; Latent Class Analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Currently in the Western world, economic gaps between the rich and poor are becoming more pronounced. Similarly, throughout history, populations have conformed to hierarchical structures and roles in which a few individuals hold most of the resources and power, while the rest of the population possesses very little of both. Despite this, a large portion of the population in developed countries still believes that the possibility of social mobility and acquiring power and wealth is largely due to factors such as ambition and hard work, more so than being born into more privileged social groups (Luttig, 2013; McCall, 2013; Mijs, 2017). This notion is supported by the lack of social responses to counteract such socioeconomic gaps. Even in societies where such inequality is highly notable (e.g., apartheid, the caste system in India), there have been few signs of widespread disapproval of these systems, except in certain cases that are clearly exceptions to the rule (Zinn, 2002). This apparent paradox has various explanations related to how society and individuals legitimize and justify certain aspects of reality. Therefore, it is of utmost importance to evaluate the impact of both legitimation and justification when analyzing the relationships that develop between individuals and their social, political, and economic realities.

From these phenomena, Jost and Banaji (1994) define the justification of the system (hereafter referred to as ESJ) as the psychological process through which individuals justify and defend the system in which they are immersed, thereby supporting the maintenance of the status quo. This phenomenon of system justification differs from other phenomena like group justification, self-justification, or ego justification, as often the operation of the current system harms the well-being of the individuals who justify it (Jost & Hunyady, 2003). On the other hand, studies such as that by Jost and Hunyady (2003), focus on accounting for why the motivational structure encourages individuals to justify the status quo. These authors postulate that the orientation towards social dominance (hereinafter, SDO) and the authoritarianism of the right wing (hereinafter, RWA) influence whether there is a higher or lower level of ESJ on the part of the individual. According to SDO theory, social inequality is sustained by structures that are reinforced by individual predispositions toward hierarchical intergroup relationships (Pratto et al., 1994). RWA, on the other hand, involves three attitudinal clusters: authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression, and conventionalism (Altemeyer, 1981). The first cluster reflects a tendency to submit to authorities perceived as legitimate in society. The second involves a predisposition towards hostility against individuals and groups perceived as potential threats to the social order. Finally, the third cluster pertains to a strong adherence to social conventions.

Both SDO and RWA can be understood as attitudinal dimensions that drive individuals towards political conservatism, thus justifying the system (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). These psychological variables provide individuals with rigid, less threatening, and orderly frameworks for understanding societal organization, generating a sense of an orderly and manageable world. Duckitt and Sibley (2009) developed a theoretical model of a dual cognitive and motivational process in the formation of ideologies and prejudices. This model proposes that two main phenomena underlie the moral and ideological attitudes and beliefs held by individuals. These phenomena are defined as goals arising from motivational needs. The first involves the need for order, structure, and stability, leading to a salience in maintaining social reality's order. The second involves motivational bases like the need for power, dominance, and competitiveness, relating to individuals' subjective perspectives on social hierarchy (Duckitt, 2001).

Duckitt and Sibley (2009), found that the dimensions of the dual process motivational model coincide directly with the RWA and SDO measurement instruments. The RWA scale corresponds to the dimension related to the need for stability, cohesion and order of social reality. This dimension is prominent in those subjects who evaluate the world as inherently dangerous and highly threatening, as opposed to those individuals who value the world as a safe and quiet place. Instead, the SDO scale corresponds to the dimension of power and dominance between social groups and stands out in those people who understand their reality as highly competitive, in which only the strong survive (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009).

Finally, various studies (eg, Jost et al., 2003; Sibley & Duckitt, 2008) found that both the RWA and the SDO are significantly related to various personality variables that in turn are related to attitudes of justification of the system (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). Likewise, both were found to be excellent predictors of the economic system justification, in addition to positively correlating with conservatism (Duckitt & Sibley, 2009). In recent decades, there have been various empirical studies on the justification of the system both with RWA (Osborne & Sibley, 2014; Zmigrod et al., 2018) and with SDO (Hoffarth et al., 2019; Jylhä & Akrami, 2015), which demonstrate a positive association between these variables (Azevedo et al., 2019; Jost et al., 2017; Vargas-Salfate et al., 2018).

Although in recent years, personality factors associated with ESJ, RWA, and SDO have started to be studied, no research has been conducted so far regarding these factors associated with ESJ in the Argentine context. Therefore, the objective of this study is to examine the relationship between SDO, RWA, and ESJ among university students in the Autonomous City of Buenos Aires, contributing to the existing body of knowledge about these phenomena and enhancing understanding of their manifestation and impact on the Argentine population.

MATERIALS AND METHODS
Participants
The study was carried out through a non-probabilistic sampling, for convenience, involving 843 subjects comprised of Argentinian university students (51.8% female; 48.2% male) between 16 and 88 years of age (M = 46.03; SD = 15.88; Mdn = 48).

Data collection techniques
The data was collected through a self-administered pencil and paper evaluation instrument, ensuring the anonymity of the participants. It was composed of:
Economic System Justification Scale (ESJ; Jost & Thompson, 2000). The scale, adapted to the Argentine context [BLINDED] was used (NNFI = .90; IFI = .93; CFI = .93; RMSEA = .041; α = .80), consisting of 7 items with 5 response anchors with Likert-type format, ranging from 1 = *Totally agree* to 5 = Totally disagree.

The internal structure has been tested on the sample of the present study and has proved to be adequate in adjusting to the model (CFI = .990; RMSEA = .063; α = .87).

Social Dominance Orientation Scale (SDO; Pratto et al., 1994). The version, adapted to the Argentine context was used [BLINDED](NNFI = .92; IFI = .94; CFI = .94; RMSEA = .064;α =. 84). This scale is made up of 14 items grouped into the Group dominance dimensions (eg, "To get ahead in life, sometimes it is necessary to step over other groups of people"; "Higher groups should dominate lower groups") and Opposition to equality (eg, "There would be fewer problems if we treated different groups more equally"; "Equality between groups of people should be our ideal"), which together make up the SDO construct (α =. 84). The response format is Likert type with five anchors, depending on the degree of agreement of the participants, with 1 = Completely disagree and 5 = *Completely agree.*

Right wing authoritarianism Scale (RWA; Altemeyer, 1981). To evaluate the construct, a reduced version of the RWA scale composed of six items was used (eg *"Our country needs a powerful leader who can confront the extremists and immoral that currently prevail in our society"; "Our ancestors should have been more honored by the way in who built this society, therefore, it is necessary to put an end to the forces that are destroying it"; "The facts show that we must be tougher on crime and sexual immorality in order to maintain law and order"*), adapted and validated to the local context (Etchezahar, Cervone, Biglieri, Quattrocchi & Prado-Gascó, 2011) (NFI = .97; CFI = .98; AGFI = .98; SRMR = .022; RMSEA = .038; α = .745). The response format for this is Likert type with five anchors depending on the degree of agreement or disagreement with each statement, with 1 = *Totally disagree* and 5 = *Totally agree.*

Sociodemographic variables: An ad hoc questionnaire was developed to collect this type of information; Among the variables considered were: sex, age and place of residence of the participants.

Ethical handling of information

University students who were part of this research participated voluntarily and anonymously after providing their consent. Likewise, they were informed that the disclosed data would be used exclusively for academic-scientific purposes, under National Law 25,326 on the protection of personal data.

Statistical processing

The statistical analysis of the data was carried out using the SPSS (version 20) and MPLUS (version 7) statistical packages. To respond to the objectives, a multivariate analysis of covariance (MANCOVA), a multiple linear regression analysis, and a latent class analysis were applied.

RESULTS

Before calculating the MANCOVA, we proceeded to analyze the accuracy of a few assumptions that enable its execution. The homogeneity of covariances was first checked, which was not verified (Box's M = .026; p = .000) (Huberty & Petroskey, 2000). Then, the homogeneity of variances was examined, which was verified for two of the three dependent variables (pRWA = .559; pESJ = .607; pSDO = .000), and the fulfillment of the assumption of multicollinearity between dependent variables could not be verified (r> .50) (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). Due to the breach of these assumptions, it was decided to interpret the Hotelling Trace statistic, considered robust for these cases (Finch & French, 2013).

The MANCOVA analysis took dependent variables RWA, ESJ and SDO, with the variable Gender and Age as a covariate. The results showed significant multivariate effects for the Gender variable (F(3, 1157) = 11.269; p < .001; η2 = .028) and Age (F(3, 1157) = 22026; p < .001; η2 = .054) on the dependent variables. The value of the Hotelling Trace statistic of both independent variables (.029 for Gender and .057 for Age) accounts for a greater effect of the Age variable on the dependent variables. When examining the means, differences were observed in the Gender variable for RWA (Males = 17.62; DE = 6.48; Females = 16.34; DE = 6.43; p < .05, η2 = .006) and SDO (Males = 18.75; DE = 7.51; Females = 16.92; DE = 6.15; p < .001, η2 = .023) both in favor of men. Regarding the variable, Age, a positive effect was observed on RWA (B = .053; p < .001) and a positive effect on SDO (B = -.050; p < .001).

In looking at the multiple linear regression analysis, the parameters were calculated using the least squares method and the enter procedure. ESJ was adopted as the dependent variable and RWA and SDO as independent. The dependent variable (ESJ) was explored in search of extreme cases that could harm the results, and no cases were found to remove. Then the best fit model was examined, for which the R^2 was taken as an indicator of the effect size, and the corrected R^2 as an indicator of the total variance explained by the model (Gil Pascual, 2011). The R2 reading that indicated a high effect size (R^2 = .371) (Gil Pascual, 2011), while the corrected R2 showed that the estimated model explained 37% of the variability of the ESJ through the SDO and RWA variables. Continuing with the evaluation of the best fit model, the statistics produced by the analysis of variance (ANOVA) were interpreted, which inform about the joint significance of the estimated parameters, to determine the existence of a linear relationship between the dependent variable and the set of the independents. Thus, the existence of a strong linear relationship between the independent and the dependent variables (p< .001) was verified.

On the other hand, the assumptions of non-autocorrelation, multicollinearity, and homoscedasticity were verified, in order to verify the fit of the estimated model to the empirical data (Xin & Xiao Gang, 2009). In this sense, appropriate values were found in the Durbin-Watson statistics (.324) that allow us to assume the independence of the residuals. However, the condition indices and the variance inflation factors (VIF) used to verify the assumption of multicollinearity yielded adequate values lower than 7 and 1 respectively. Finally, homoscedasticity was studied by means of the scatter graph of the residuals, accounting for its compliance.

Focusing on the interpretation of the coefficients, it was first observed that both independent variables, RWA and SDO, significantly influence the dependent, ESJ. According to the Beta statistic, it is possible to affirm that the RWA variable (45.4) makes a greater

contribution of its variability to the explanation of the ESJ variable than the SDO variable (29.7%). In turn, the reading of the B statistic reports that for each point in which RWA and SDO increase, the ESJ variable increases by .472 and .292 respectively. Likewise, these parameters can be considered highly significant given that the B values maintain a difference greater than double with respect to their errors.

Moving to the analysis of latent classes, the variables Gender, Age, SWA, SDO, and ESJ were included, grouping the values of the last four into two categories (high and low) taking the 50th percentile as the cut-off point. The estimation method, maximum likelihood, was used. After testing several models with different number of classes, it was decided to keep the two-class model since it yielded statistically signifcant values (p<.001) in the Vuong-Lo-Mendell-Rubin test and in the bootstrapped parametric likelihood ratio test. In turn, this model is coherent from a theoretical point of view.

As can be seen in Table 1, the size of class 1 (54.3%) is greater than that of class 2 (45.6%). In relation to the analysis of response probabilities, it can be seen that class 1 comprises people who are characterized by being mostly male (probability [P] = .542) without age differentiation (P_{youth} = .507; $P_{seniors}$ = .493), mostly authoritarian (P = .737) and oriented to Social Dominance (P = .690) that in turn present a high economic system justification (.809). Class 2, on the other hand, is characteristic of male individuals (P = .588) Young people (.534) with low Authoritarianism (.816), low social dominance (P = .776) and low economic system justification (P =. 941). As can be seen in table 2, in terms of gender distribution, Class 1 had a higher likelihood of male membership (54.2%) compared to female membership (45.8%), while Class 2 showed a higher probability of male membership (58.8%) than female membership (41.2%). Furthermore, age distribution within Class 1 revealed a greater probability of youth membership (50.7%) compared to seniors (49.3%), whereas Class 2 exhibited a higher probability of youth membership (53.4%) than seniors (46.6%). Regarding ideological orientations, Class 1 displayed elevated probabilities of high Right Wing Authoritarianism (73.7%), high Social Dominance Orientation (69.0%), and high Economic System Justification (80.9%), whereas Class 2 had higher probabilities of low Right Wing Authoritarianism (81.6%), low Social Dominance Orientation (77.6%), and low Economic System Justification (94.1 %).

Table 1. Regression analysis between RWA, SDO and ESJ

Model	B	IC 95%	Error Typical	Beta	t	Sig.
(Constant)	6.362	[5.317, 7.406]	.532		11.949	.000
RWA	.472	[.422, .521]	.025	.454	18.686	.000
SDO	.292	[.245, .399]	.024	.297	12.217	.000

Note: RWA= Right Wing Authoritarianism; SDO= Social Dominance Orientation

Table 2. Latent class analysis

Model		Probabillity of response	
		Class 1	Class 2
Class probability		.543	.456
Gender	Female	.458	.412
	Male	.542	.588
Age	Youth	.507	.534
	Seniors	.493	.466
RWA	Low	.263	.816
	High	.737	.184
SDO	Low	.310	.776
	High	.690	.224

ESJ	Low	.191	.941
	High	.809	.059

Note: RWA= Right Wing Authoritarianism; SDO= Social Dominance Orientation; ESJ= Economic Sys-tem Justification

DISCUSSION

The main objective of this study was to investigate the correlation between ESJ and SDO and RWA. According to Jost and Thompson (2000), the correlation between ESJ, SDO, and RWA is attributed to their varying degrees of involvement in justifying the system. This alignment can be observed in the current study, where a linear regression analysis indicated that when both predictor variables (SDO and RWA) were examined concurrently, they provided better prediction for the dependent variable (ESJ). Additionally, this study is the first to apply latent class analysis to explore relationships between SDO, RWA, ESJ, age, and gender. This approach enables us to identify two distinct classes. The first class consists mostly of men with no age differentiation, predominantly authoritarian, and inclined toward Social Dominance, displaying a high degree of economic system justification. The second class is characterized by young male individuals with low levels of authoritarianism, social dominance, and economic system justification. In contrast to previous studies that relied on correlational analysis, the latent class analysis enhances our understanding of how SDO, RWA, ESJ, gender, and age intersect and interact.

This alignment is illuminated by social dominance theory (SDT), which posits a tendency to hierarchize intergroup relationships, closely related to ESJ in its meritocratic form. Jost, Banaji, and Nosek (2004) propose that within the two dimensions constituting SDO, the Group Dominance factor reflects intergroup justification, while the Opposition to Equality factor reflects system justification. Consequently, social dominance theory offers a psychological framework upon which ESJ is constructed, stemming from an individual's predisposition towards hierarchical and non-egalitarian intergroup relations (Jost et al., 2004). In this context, SDO emerges as a critical component for comprehending the phenomenon of system justification, as it underpins the legitimate myths that either validate or challenge the system (Pratto et al., 1994; Jost & Thompson, 2000). These proposed legitimate myths are socialism, multiculturalism, human rights, the Protestant ethic, universalism, nationalism, sexism, classism, and racism (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). Their influence on the justification of the equality-inequality system will vary from one individual to another, regardless of their social group.

On the other hand, for RWA, it refers to authoritarian submission, authoritarian aggression and conventionalism. Authoritarian submission refers to the general acceptance of the speeches and actions promoted by the authorities perceived as legitimate, together with the willingness to comply with their instructions without the need to be induced to do so (Altemeyer, 1996). Thus, authoritarian people think that respect and obedience are essential virtues for social order. Along these lines, they tend to believe that those in positions of authority know what is best for the citizens and punish those who question it. In turn, any criticism made of authority is seen as destabilizing, destructive and motivated by sinister and hidden goals based on a fervent desire to cause trouble. Instead, authoritarian aggression involves harm or the intention to cause it) be it psychological or physical (Altemeyer, 1996). This intention is accompanied by the belief that the authorities perceived as legitimate approve it or that such action will favor its maintenance. He who is the object of aggression is usually considered a deviant because they threaten the social order (Altemeyer, 1981). Finally, conventionalism refers to a strong acceptance and commitment to the traditional norms of a society in general or a group in particular.

These three attitudes strongly contribute to ESJ, since for authoritarian people, all those who criticize what is established, such as the economic system, represent a deviation from the norm, and are therefore considered deviant. For this reason, they tend to reject not only discursively but also physically any type of criticism of the system and because they tend to obey the orders of those representatives of the economic system

instituted from their messages and political platforms that continue the prevailing socioeconomic order.

In regards to comparisons with different contexts, it was observed that the finding produced by this analysis follows the tendencies of results obtained in other socio-geographical contexts. The findings made in these studies regarding RWA, SDO and ESJ and gender shows that males are potentially more likelyto score higher than females in SDO, RWA and ESJ(Mirisola, Sibley, Boca & Duckitt, 2007). In a similar the results of this study concur with existent literature that age shows a positive correlation to the variables measured in this study (Zubielevitch, Osborne, Milojev& Sibley, 2022).

In conclusion, while the hypotheses put forth in this study have been substantiated, there are limitations that could be addressed in future research. First and foremost, it's important to acknowledge that the sampling methodology employed in this study was chosen to achieve the required number of participants for hypothesis testing, given the applied statistical techniques (Hair et al., 2006). However, this sampling approach doesn't facilitate the generalization of results to the entire population due to the absence of randomness in sample selection. The study was conducted within a relatively homogenous population of university students, a group that has been extensively used in prior research on this subject. This homogeneity aids in result comparison. To broaden the scope of findings, future studies should incorporate individuals from diverse social backgrounds. Secondly, both authoritarianism and social dominance, as well as economic system justification, may fluctuate based on sample characteristics and contextual circumstances.

In this context, non-experimental studies like the present work do not provide a clear distinction of the roles of authoritarianism and social dominance in economic system justification within specific situations. This aspect could be elucidated through experimental research designs, which are capable of manipulating variables such as authoritarianism and social dominance. Future studies should venture in this direction to investigate how authoritarianism and social dominance influence economic system justification

from a situational perspective. The potential of these variables to be manipulated and their effects in real-world scenarios remain topics for exploration in forthcoming research endeavours.

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