

## Difficulties in the Emotional Processing of Intimate Partner Violence Perpetrators

**Authors :** Javier Comes Fayos, Isabel Rodríguez Moreno, Sara Bressanutti, Marisol Lila, Angel Romero Martínez, Luis Moya Albiol

**Abstract :** Given the great impact produced by gender-based violence, its comprehensive approach seems essential. Consequently, research has focused on risk factors for violent behaviour, linking various psychosocial variables, as well as cognitive and neuropsychological deficits with the aggressors. However, studies on affective processing are scarce, so the present study investigates possible emotional alterations in men convicted of gender violence. The participants were 51 aggressors, who attended the CONTEXTO program with sentences of less than two years, and 47 men with no history of violence. The sample did not differ in age, socioeconomic level, education, or alcohol and other substances consumption. Anger, alexithymia and facial recognition of other people's emotions were assessed through the State-Trait Anger Expression Inventory (STAXI-2), the Toronto Alexithymia Scale (TAS-20) and Reading the mind in the eyes (REM), respectively. Men convicted of gender-based violence showed higher scores on the anger trait and temperament dimensions, as well as on the anger expression index. They also scored higher on alexithymia and in the identification and emotional expression subscales. In addition, they showed greater difficulties in the facial recognition of emotions by having a lower score in the REM. These results seem to show difficulties in different affective areas in men condemned for gender violence. The deficits are reflected in greater difficulty in identifying and expressing emotions, in processing anger and in recognizing the emotions of others. All these difficulties have been related to the use of violent behavior. Consequently, it is essential and necessary to include emotional regulation in intervention programs for men who have been convicted of gender-based violence.

**Keywords :** alexithymia, anger, emotional processing, emotional recognition, empathy, intimate partner violence

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