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Sociodemographic and psycho social Differences Between Hate Crime Offenders and Other Non-Bias-Motivated Criminals: Implications for Prison Rehabilitation Programs

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Abstract

Hate crimes have severe consequences for the victims and for all members of the victim's social category. Prison programs must address the criminogenic needs of the participants, especially in this kind of crime, in order to prevent recidivism. This study seeks to understand the role of prejudice and aggression in the execution of hate crimes, in order to design effective interventions for hate crime offenders. Sociodemographic, criminological, and psychosocial variables were assessed in a sample of 33 hate crime offenders sentenced to prison or community service and in a group of 38 non-bias-motivated criminals ($n=71$). The individuals convicted of hate crimes have higher reactive and proactive aggression, subtle prejudice, homophobia, and social dominance orientation. The implications of these results for the Penitentiary Administration programs will be discussed.

Keywords

hate crime, prejudice, aggression, prison programs, criminogenic needs

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Introduction

Increased reports of hate crimes against European citizens in the United Kingdom after the Brexit referendum, attacks on Chinese citizens in Germany as a result of anti-Asian sentiment arising from the COVID-19 pandemic, or increased attacks on mosques in France, are some recent examples that show that hate crimes are a worrying phenomenon in Europe and in the rest of the world. Hate crime is a persistent social problem for any nation as it disrupts social harmony. Throughout history, there have always been social conflicts motivated by religion, race, or politics. Unfortunately, acts of violence against people perceived as members of the out-group are still a constant in multicultural and multiethnic communities.

In order to improve and harmonize the response of the police and the criminal justice system in European countries, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) has proposed a comprehensive definition of hate crimes as "criminal acts motivated by bias or prejudice towards particular groups of people." Although there is no universal definition of hate crime and such definitions are not without controversy, they may be described as offences against the victim due to their actual or perceived race, language, color, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation, or national origin, or other similar characteristics.

This international definition requires subsequent adaptation to the legislation of each state since this term encompasses different forms of incidents and criminal offenses motivated by racist, ideological, religious, ethnic, nationality, family status, sexual orientation, illness, or disability. The amendment made to the Spanish Penal Code by Organic Law 1/2015, has led to the expansion of the catalog of aggravating circumstances contained in Article 22.4 of the Criminal Code. Therefore, within hate crimes, the perpetrator of the crime must act driven by one of the discriminatory motives foreseen in the type of crime included in the Penal Code or within the aggravating circumstances modifying criminal liability (committing the crime for racist, anti-Semitic or other types of discrimination related to the ideology, religion or beliefs of the victim, the ethnicity, race or nation to which he/she belongs, his/her sex, sexual orientation or identity, gender reasons, the disease he/she suffers, or his/her disability).

Consequently, hate crimes are not only committed with the intention to cause direct harm to the victim, they also fulfil a symbolic and instrumental function by extending the threat to a community, neighborhood, or group (Berk, 1990). As B. Perry (2002) explains: "Hate crime is, in fact, an assault against all members of stigmatized and marginalized communities." The hate-motivated incident may affect the daily routines of members of the victim's social group: they may avoid certain places or even move away from their neighborhood, fearing for their own safety (Craig, 2002). According to Craig (2002, p. 89), "fear is felt well beyond the geographic and temporal locale of the incident to affect all members of the victim's social category."

Based on the victim's perception of bias in hate crime victimizations (Masucci & Langton, 2017), hate crimes are motivated in the USA firstly by racial bias (48.1%) and subsequently, by the victim's ethnicity (35.4%) and gender (29.3%). To a less frequent but still important degree, hate crime victimizations were also deemed to

arise from bias against the victim's sexual orientation (22%), religion (17%), or disability (16%). In Spain, according to the Hate Crimes Report, out of the 1,401 known hate crimes in 2020, 77.7% were related to racism-xenophobia, ideology, or sexual orientation. Thus, hate crime victims are chosen because of their group identity or the groups that they associate with, and this is what distinguishes hate crimes from other types of crime. Given the social component of this crime, criminological research cannot rely solely on the general literature on crime but must continue to examine hate crimes as a unique crime that may be influenced by different variables and therefore explained by alternative theoretical models.

Several factors have been considered in the attempt to better comprehend the process by which a person hates or fears another person, and thus to explain offender bias in victim selection where the only reason is that the victim belongs to a socially identifiable group. This is necessary because hate crimes are remarkably different in terms of perpetrator motivations, victim characteristics, and cultural ideologies regarding the victim's social group. For this reason, multiple explanations and theories have sought to account for this diversity of hate crimes (racist attacks, aggressions against LGBT individuals, or violent religious conflicts). Many authors have developed theoretical models from a psychological, sociological, and criminological perspective, to describe hate, prejudice processes, and bias (Craig, 2002; Méndez & Suarez, 2019).

Prejudice, Stereotypes, and Discrimination

Hate crime is an illegal act where the victim is intentionally targeted on the basis of the perpetrator's prejudice against the former's actual or perceived status (Craig, 2002). Social psychology has demonstrated that prejudices are strongly associated with stereotypes and discrimination. Although the activation of stereotypes does not necessarily imply the existence of a negative attitude toward members of other groups or their unfair treatment, stereotypes can lead to or justify prejudice and discrimination (Dovidio et al., 2000).

Attitudes are deemed to be evaluations that result in negative or positive responses to people, issues, or objects. The tripartite theory of attitudes (Katz & Stotland, 1959) suggests that attitude has three components: (1) the cognitive dimension or stereotype, which corresponds to the beliefs regarding the characteristics associated with the group, (2) prejudice, which constitutes affective and evaluative reactions, and (3) discrimination, which refers to behavior.

For a more in-depth discussion of prejudice, we may state that it consists of a negative attitude and feeling toward the members of a particular social group (Allport, 1954; Brown, 2010). According to the Dual-Attitude model (Wilson et al., 2000), there are two distinctive types of prejudice: (1) old-fashioned prejudice is explicit, blatant, and involves obvious acts of discrimination and (2) modern prejudice is still prevalent but it is implicit or automatic, and its expressions have shifted to a subtler or implicit form. Subtle prejudice includes aspects such as the awareness that discrimination is wrong but holding beliefs and acting in ways that reinforce structural inequality between groups (Nelson, 2006). Despite their differences, previous studies have demonstrated

that classical and modern prejudices are two distinct but highly correlated constructs (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Swim et al., 1995). Nevertheless, some studies have found little correlation between explicit (more deliberative or controlled) and implicit (more automatic) measures of prejudice (Dovidio et al., 1997). This is because people consciously claim to hold and endorse egalitarian values, but they still hold unconscious negative feelings and attitudes toward the out-group (Wilson, et al., 2000).

According to Tajfel (1981), stereotypes have a social function. They are especially useful to positively differentiate in favor of the endo-group. When we assign positive stereotypes to our group as compared to other groups, it contributes to a more positive perception of our group and consequently affects our self-esteem. Favoring one's own group does not necessarily imply hostility toward other groups.

Intergroup Threats

The shift from intra-group favoritism to ex-group hostility is usually marked by threats or fear, which in many cases is perceived and not real. Realistic threats consist of tangible conflicts of interest such as perceived competition over jobs, housing, and other resources (Walters et al., 2016). According to the Realist Conflict Theory, situations where two groups compete for limited resources stimulate antipathy and prejudice toward out-group members and inter-group conflict (Sherif, 1966; Sherif & Sherif, 1953). For this reason, our reactions toward other groups are not dependent solely on our negative evaluation of them. It seems obvious that a multitude of factors converge with prejudice at the point of origin of intergroup conflicts, including social and economic deprivation that may elicit specific emotions such as fear or hate, which in turn encourage certain behaviors (Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005; Mackie et al., 2000), or the perception of injustice that may result in a greater perceived threat (Pauwels & Heylen, 2020; Williamson et al., 2021).

According to the theory of intergroup emotions (Mackie et al., 2000, 2008) the behavioral reactions that we display toward groups are derived from our emotional reactions toward those groups, which in turn depend on our evaluations of these groups based on our social identity. Some authors (e.g., Cottrell & Neuberg, 2005) argue that the specific emotions we feel toward members of other groups arise from the perception that they pose a threat in issues that are important to us (e.g., our security, values, and economic resources). A widespread prejudice is that immigrants take away jobs (in a context of high unemployment) from nationals and that they commit more crimes than citizens. Based on the perceived threat, different emotions such as fear or hate will emerge and these emotions will influence prejudice, even precipitating a hostile or aggressive reaction to the out-group (Cottrell et al., 2010).

Social Dominance Theory (Pratto et al., 1994) also provides some insight into why discrimination between groups occurs and the belief in the supremacy of some groups over others. This theory is based on the observation that all human societies tend to be structured as systems based on hierarchies, in which one group is hegemonic (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, 2004).

From this theoretical framework, an attempt has been made to delimit the mechanisms that produce and maintain these social hierarchies. Therefore, Sidanius et al. (2001) propose a trimorphic structure of social hierarchies in which there are three differentiated systems: two systems corresponding to age and gender, and a third one that they call arbitrary, where social hierarchies are constructed through different characteristics of the groups, such as race, culture, religion, or any distinctive element that may characterize the groups.

From this trimorphic structure, Sidanius and Pratto (2004) introduce three basic assumptions of Social Dominance theory: (1) while hierarchies based on age and sex invariably exist in all social systems, there are other hierarchical systems that are arbitrary and emerge when economic surpluses are produced in societies, (2) most forms of intergroup conflict and exgroup oppression such as racism, sexism, nationalism, and others can be conceptualized as manifestations of the human tendency to form group-based social hierarchies, and (3) social systems are subject to countervailing forces that reinforce and weaken the hierarchical structure.

Ideologies that promote or maintain the existence of hierarchies, and thus group inequality, can become tools that legitimize intergroup violence. However, the justification of the equality-inequality system will vary from one individual to another, regardless of their social group. Thus, Social Dominance Orientation (SDO) is proposed as the individual predisposition toward hierarchical and non-egalitarian intergroup relations (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999). SDO expresses the degree to which a person desires the group to which he or she belongs to dominate and be superior to exogroups (Sidanius & Pratto, 2004).

The contact hypothesis (Allport, 1954) establishes that promoting positive contact between members of different groups may contribute to reducing prejudice and therefore combating social dominance, an idea that is empirically supported (Brown & Hewstone, 2005; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, new recommendations and developments in: Paolini et al., 2021).

Prejudice and Hate

Allport (1954) points to the importance of prejudice as the point of origin of hate, considering it as an emotion of extreme dislike or aggressive impulses targeting a person or group. Hate differs from other emotions such as anger and feelings of revenge. While anger focuses on changing or restoring the situation caused by another person, feelings of revenge focus on restoring the self, and hate focuses on eliminating the hated person or group (van Doorn, 2018). In his model, Beck (2003) describes how one proceeds from hate to violence: when a perception of threat or intense feelings of hate directed at the supposed enemy causes them to react violently (reactive or heated violence). On the other hand, there is another type of violence, which is planned, instrumental and does not require hostility toward the victim (cold violence). Sternberg and Sternberg (2008) propose an integrative theory called the Double Theory of Hate, which states that hate against people or groups results from different cognitions, feelings, and behavioral manifestations. Hate may be manifested in very different forms

and degrees, depending on the presence and intensity of its constituents, their individual or collective perception, their reciprocity between groups (or people), their social justification or legitimacy, in addition to individual and contextual factors that suppress or facilitate its different manifestations.

From Hate to Aggression

There is a large body of research on the relationship between prejudice, hate, and aggression. According to the Social Identity Theory, high-prejudiced individuals gain positive identity by denigrating the out-group members, which may also include aggressions, in order to distinguish themselves from the victim's social group and to simultaneously achieve in-group identification and approval from other like-minded group members (Hamner, 1992). Back in 1973, a classic study in Social Psychology revealed that high-prejudiced subjects were significantly more aggressive than low-prejudiced ones (Genthner & Taylor, 1973). More recently, Beal et al. (2000) found that the same conclusions could be applied to modern racism. Subjects with modern or subtle prejudices were more aggressive regardless of the target's race.

Classic research has firmly established that individuals who commit instrumental aggression may be distinguished from those who commit hostile aggression (Anderson & Bushman, 2002). Instrumental aggression is goal-directed, proactive and has a purpose other than harming the victim, and frequently targets strangers and acquaintances as opposed to intimates. Reactive or hostile aggression has been deemed as being impulsive, unplanned, and occurs in response to frustration and hostility, driven by anger and triggered, for example, by a perceived threat or provocation (see Geen, 2001, for a review).

Recently, empirical studies have also found that social prejudices have a positive and high correlation with intergroup conflict and with individual violent behavior toward the outgroup (Lyons et al., 2010; Parrott, 2009; Piumattia & Mosso, 2017; Thomsen et al., 2008). The results of several studies with young people and adolescents have revealed that prejudiced beliefs provide the motivational basis for ethnic victimization (Bayram Özdemir et al., 2020) and that negative attitudes toward immigrants lead to aggressive thoughts and violent behavior in general (Piumattia & Mosso, 2017). Prejudices are not only a motivation for hate crime offenders, but they may also be used to justify their aggression toward their victims (Craig, 2002). Moreover, negative behaviors and attitudes toward out-groups within the society may occur more often when individuals experience harsh or frustrating circumstances in their lives, such as unemployment or low socioeconomic status (Berkowitz, 1981). As a matter of fact, many convicted perpetrators of hate crimes are career criminals who seek to aggressively engage with the object of their hate rather than avoid the objects of their disdain (Dunbar, 1999).

From a perpetrator perspective, there is little understanding in the literature regarding hate crime offenders and the types of crimes they commit. The published data on hate crime offenders are severely limited, but the few studies conducted to date present some shared characteristics of bias-crime perpetrators. Some studies have found that

they are mostly young adults or juveniles (Craig, 2002; Godinet & Stotzer, 2017) who are more likely to be unemployed or have low socioeconomic status (Walters et al., 2018). Additionally, hate crime offenders have a lengthy violent criminal record, compared to other non-bias offenders, with more prior arrests for more serious crimes (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2020), and they tend to be crime "generalists" rather than specialists (Messner et al., 2004; Roxell, 2011).

Rehabilitation programs for offenders must focus on their criminogenic needs, that is, on the causes for committing the crime. It is essential to delve into the psychological processes responsible for this type of crime and the psychosocial characteristics of these criminals to design therapeutic interventions based on scientific evidence. This is a pioneering study that analyses the role of psychosocial variables in a sample of hate crime offenders and it represents progress in the awareness of the underlying mechanisms of this type of crime, which has many repercussions for victims, the groups that experience it, and society in general.

Current Study

Although hate crime violence is a topic of growing interest in society, there is a need of more evidence about who commits this type of criminal offenses. Therefore, the main goal of this study is to delve deeper into this criminal phenomenon, analyzing the sociodemographic and psychological differences between hate crime offenders and other non-bias-motivated criminals. Firstly, we will study the sociodemographic, social and criminological characteristics for a group of hate crime offenders and a second group of offenders of other crime types. Finally, given the theoretical relevance of prejudice and aggression and another group variables in this type of crime, we will examine the differences in these psychosocial variables.

Method

Participants

The sample consists of 33 hate crime offenders (HC) sentenced to prison terms or community service and a group of 38 non-bias-motivated criminals (non-HC). According to the Spanish penal code, hate crimes include serious bias-motivated aggressions (24.2% for Homicide, 15.2% for Aggravated Murder, and 21.2% for Aggravated Assault) and less serious bias-motivated violence (6% for Threats of violence or verbal abuse, 3% for Harassment, and 6.1% for Hate Speech). The participants in the non-bias-motivated group were selected according to the severity of the attack but without bias motivation. These offences were Homicide or Aggravated Murder (21%), Robbery (29%), Aggravated Assault (13%), Domestic Abuse (16%), Sexual Abuse (5%), Sexual Aggression or Rape (6%), Verbal Threats or Harassment (6%), Resisting Police (3%), and Drug Supply (3%).

Most of the hate offenders were male (93.9%), but there were also two women in the sample (6.1%). Similarly, the non-HC group consisted of 94.7% male and 5.3%

female participants. Only 5.6% of the sample (four cases) had a disability, half being cognitive, and the other half a physical disability. The mean age of hate offenders was 30.4 years ($SD=9.5$) and 33.8 years ($SD=7.8$) for the non-HC group, with no significant difference ($p=.1$). Non-HC group participants were selected based not only on the severity of the offense but also by age. This is especially important because hate offenders tend to be younger than other inmates, therefore the non-HC group participants could not be selected randomly from the prison population as the mean age is 41.3 years (Secretaría General de Instituciones Penitenciarias, 2019), which is higher than the HC group, and would have led to an older non-HC group. We had to ensure that both groups were similar in terms of age, so that possible differences found in the psychological measures (like impulsivity or aggression) could not be attributed to this age difference.

Finally, most of the participants were nationals, 75.8% for the HC group and 78.4% for the non-HC group. The rest of the sample participants were from Ecuador, Colombia, Morocco, Romania, Dominican Republic, or Brazil.

Procedure

The HC sample was compiled from the Spanish prison and probation databases. These national databases include legal and penitentiary information on all prison inmates and people serving community sentences. First, the members of the research team downloaded a national list of all the inmates serving a prison or a community sentence due to a hate crime. Subsequently, the prison and probation professionals contacted the inmates and offered them the opportunity to participate in the study, voluntarily, and upon signing an informed consent form.

Within the same prison and community services as the participating hate crime offenders, offenders with similar sociodemographic characteristics and crime severity, but without the prejudiced motivation, were offered the same opportunity to participate in the study. For this group, therefore, a convenience sampling technique was used. These non-HC group participants also signed an informed consent form prior to participation. The final sample is from 16 prisons and 6 community services in Spain.

The research team created a questionnaire with two parts: firstly, a section of sociodemographic information and risk factors, with categorical and dichotomic variables, related to sex, education, nationality, marital status, household, employment, family history, intimate partner relationship, peer group, drug abuse, gang involvement (group involved in organized crime activity with hate motivated behavior and symbols), and police records The legal information, gang involvement and criminal records included in this first section were gathered directly from the sentence. The second part consisted of a battery of tests regarding psychological measures of interest. The questionnaire was delivered to the inmates by the prison and community service psychologists, under the direction of the research team. These professionals helped the participants when needed, especially with the first section if they had any questions about the variables, according to the definition variable document provided

by the research team. Finally, they sent the questionnaires to the research team members for data introduction, processing, and analysis.

Measures

A *Reactive-Proactive Aggression Questionnaire* (RPQ) (Andreu et al., 2009; Raine et al., 2006) is a 23-item self-report questionnaire where the participant rates how often a physical or verbal aggressive behavior has occurred in the past, with 12 items for proactive (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$) and 11 items for reactive aggression (Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$).

A *Prejudiced Attitude Test* (TAP) (Rojas et al., 2012) was used to measure prejudice toward the out-group, the majority against the minority group and vice versa, based on the three-component model of prejudiced attitude (cognitive, affective, and conative/behavioral). The test consists of 16 items: eight items measure the cognitive component (beliefs about the out-group), seven items measure the affective component (emotions), and one item measures the tendency to action (preferred social distance from the out-group). Cronbach's α ranged from .74 to .89 for the three components.

Subtle and Blatant Prejudice Scale (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Rueda & Navas, 1996). Subtle prejudice (cold, distant, and indirect) has three components: (1) the defense of traditional values, (2) the exaggeration of cultural differences, and (3) the denial of positive emotions. Blatant prejudice (traditional, direct, aggressive, and evident) is composed of two factors: (1) threat and rejection and (2) anti-intimacy. Cronbach's α is .82 for both scales.

A *Homophobia Test* (Oltra et al., 2017) was used to assess prejudice toward homosexuals and other members of the LGTBI community, characterized by the presence of both a negative attitude and discomfort, understood respectively as rejection and fear. The test consists of 33 items and measures the behavioral, cognitive, affective, and emotional components of homophobia (Cronbach's $\alpha = .99$).

The *Attitudes Toward People With Disability Scale* (Verdugo et al., 1995) is a 37-item instrument that includes five sub-scales: (1) Assessment of capacities and limitations; (2) Recognition/denial of rights; (3) Personal implication; (4) Generic description, and (5) Role assumption (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$).

Social Dominance Orientation (Pratto et al., 1994; Silvan-Ferrero & Bustillos, 2007) is a 16-item scale that comprises statements about general group-based egalitarianism rated on a 1 "Strongly disagree" to 7 "Strongly agree" scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$). It includes two subdimensions of SDO: the first one reflects support for group-based dominance hierarchies, and the other may reflect opposition to group-based equality.

Data Analysis

This study was conducted in two stages: First we assessed group differences between bias-motivated offenders and non-bias-motivated criminals at the bivariate level. Student's *t*-test was used to compare hate crime offenders and the non-HC group in continuous variables, and Pearson's chi-squared test was used to compare proportions

Table 1. Bivariate Comparison of Percentages Between Bias and Non-Bias Motivated Offenders.

	Bias motivated	Non-bias motivated			
Offender characteristics	%	%	χ^2	*p*-Value	Φ
Living with family of origin	69.7	34.2	12.371	*	0.35
No intimate partner	40.6	18.4	9.538	*	0.23
Job stability	28.6	71.4	3.784	*	0.43
Gang involvement	54.5	2.7	23.860	**	0.56

*$p < .05$. **$p < .001$.

of dichotomous variables. Bonferroni correction was used to avoid type I errors for multiple comparisons. Effect sizes are reported in terms of Cohen's *d* and Φ coefficient, respectively. Secondly, the relationship between psychological measures was examined with a correlational analysis. Data analyses were conducted using SPSS 26.0 (IBM).

Results

Hate Crimes and Non-HC Group Differences

Table 1 displays a bivariate comparison of percentages in sociodemographic characteristics between bias-motivated offenders and other criminals. As may be seen, most hate crime offenders still lived with their family of origin in comparison to other non-bias- offenders ($\chi^2(2) = 12.371$, $p < .05$, $\Phi = .35$). Furthermore, bias-motivated offenders lacked intimate partner relationships ($\chi^2(2) = 9.538$, $p < .05$, $\Phi = .23$) or stable employment ($\chi^2(2) = 3.784$, $p < .05$, $\Phi = .43$). Finally, compared to non-bias criminality, hate crimes seem to be highly associated with gang involvement ($\chi^2(2) = 23.860$, $p < .001$, $\Phi = .56$).

Table 2 presents a bivariate comparison of means in psychological variables between bias-motivated offenders and other criminals. Hate crime offenders display significantly higher reactive aggression ($t(68) = 2.10$; $p = .002$, $d = 0.50$) and proactive aggression ($t(68) = 1.69$; $p = .004$, $d = 0.41$) in comparison to other criminals. In connection with the prejudiced attitudes analyzed, hate crime offenders present significantly more subtle prejudice, it is colder, more distant, and indirect than blatant prejudice, compared to the non-HC group ($t\ (68) = 2.75$; $p < .001$, $d = 0.66$). However, no significant differences are found in blatant prejudice, prejudiced attitudes toward people with disability or prejudiced attitudes in general (the cognitive or tendency to action components). In contrast, hate crime offenders report higher prejudiced attitudes, in the affective component ($t(68) = 1.99$; $p = .003$, $d = 0.48$) and higher homophobia ($t\ (68) = 1.64$; $p = .004$, $d = 0.41$) than other criminals. Finally, HC group present significantly higher social dominance ($t(68) = 1.67$; $p = .004$, $d = 0.40$) and social group orientation ($t(68) = 1.79$; $p = .003$, $d = 0.43$) than non-HC group.

Table 2. Bivariate Comparison of Means in Psychological measures Between Bias and Non-Bias Motivated Offenders.

Psychological measures	Bias motivated *M* (*SD*)	Non-bias motivated *M* (*SD*)	*t* test	*df*	*p* (one-tailed)	Cohen's *d*
Reactive aggression	10.8 (3.8)	8.8 (4.1)	2.10	68	*	0.50
Proactive aggression	5.7 (4.3)	4.0 (4.0)	1.685	68	*	0.41
Subtle prejudice	32.6 (5.9)	28.6 (6.1)	2.75	68	**	0.66
Blatant prejudice	24.4 (7.3)	22.3 (5.1)	1.543	68	ns	
Prejudiced attitudes	7.7 (2.2)	6.9 (2.2)	1.006	68	ns	0.48
Cognitive component	21.9 (5.8)	21.1 (4.7)	0.611	67	ns	
Affective component	20.0 (6.6)	17.0 (6.1)	1.985	68	*	
Homophobia	71.9 (28.9)	62.1 (20.9)	1.644	68	*	0,41
Prejudiced attitudes toward people with disability	10.1 (4.1)	9.4 (4.1)	0.734	68	ns	
Social dominance	46.5 (18.1)	40.3 (12.6)	1.670	68	*	0.40
orientation	25.2 (9.8)	21.5 (7.6)	1.798	68	*	0.43
Social group orientation	21.3 (10.6)	18.9 (9.3)	1.015	68	ns	
Equality opposition						

$^{*}p < .05$. $^{**}p < .001$.

Correlational Analyses

Table 3 displays the correlations including hate crime and non-HC offenders between the variables that have shown significant differences between the two groups. When it comes to psychological variables, hate crime offenders have higher scores in reactive and proactive aggression and subtle prejudice and reactive aggression are significantly correlated in both groups. However, reactive and proactive aggression are significantly associated with higher levels of homophobia and social dominance and group orientation only in non-HC offenders. Higher levels of homophobia and subtle prejudice are associated, in turn, with social dominance and group orientation in hate crime offenders. Finally, and as expected, the highest correlations are found between the subscales of the same variable, between reactive and proactive aggression, and between social dominance and social group orientation.

Discussion

The main objective of this study was to analyze the differences between hate crime offenders and other criminals, in order to adapt rehabilitation programs to their criminogenic needs. Our first finding was that most hate crime offenders still lived with their parents at the time of the offence and had no intimate partners. Additionally, the

Table 3. Correlational Analysis.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1. Reactive aggression	1	.800**	.453**	0.59	.274*	.234*	.343**	.007	−.015	−.279*	.262*
2. Proactive aggression		1	.320**	0.70	.304**	.222*	.245*	.006	.031	−.236	.291*
3. Subtle prejudice			1	.152	.391**	.386**	.423**	.135	−.033	−.381**	.411**
4. Prejudiced attitudes				1	.222*	.262*	.363**	.143	.030	−.184	.202
5. Homophobia					1	.631**	.594**	.212	−.037	−.166	.145
6. Social dominance orientation						1	.807**	.153	.025	.034	.165
7. Social group orientation							1	.056	−.017	.016	.197
8. Living with family of origin								1	−.203	.249*	.347**
9. No intimate partner									1	.120	−.139
10. Job stability										1	−.242
11. Gang involvement											1

*$p < .005$. **$p < .001$.

majority of the hate crime offenders, in comparison to other types of offenders, lacked job stability, making them financially dependent on their families.

There is little information published on the characteristics or profile of hate crime offenders (see Jolliffe & Farrington, 2020, as an exception). However, our findings are consistent with the few available studies that define hate crime offenders as mostly males, young, and unemployed (Jolliffe & Farrington, 2020; Levin & Reichelmann, 2015). Youth unemployment has been a major concern for European countries since the recent economic crisis. This social problem is particularly prevalent in southern Europe, ranging from 38.9% in Portugal to 54.6% youth unemployment in Spain, the highest across Europe (O'Reilly et al., 2015). Young adults in Spain not only face high unemployment rate, but also job instability. They usually have temporary jobs interspersed with bouts of unemployment or economic inactivity that impede them from achieving residential independence. According to Eurostat (2021), in Spain 64% of young people (between 25- and 29-year-old) live with their parents compared to the 42% European average. These two risk factors (unemployment and living with the parents) are found in significantly higher proportion in hate crime offenders, compared to other offenders with similar social and economic backgrounds. This relationship between hate crime and socioeconomic deprivation or lack of job opportunities should be considered and addressed in rehabilitation programs for hate crime offenders.

Secondly, the major difference with other types of crime was gang involvement, with half of the hate crime offenders participating in hate groups prior to the crime committed (organized racist groups, right-wing extremist groups, anarchist extremists, violent football fan groups, etc.). Previous studies have already established that hate crimes are often committed by multiple offenders or hate groups (Craig, 2002; Levin, & Reichelmann, 2015; Ruback, Gladfelter, & Lantz, 2015) and these group hate attacks are positively associated with more serious injuries in victims (Lantz & Kim, 2019).

To understand the connection between unemployed youngsters who become gang-members to commit hate crimes, it is important to consider the Realist Conflict Theory. As mentioned before, group competition for scarce economic resources such as a job can stimulate prejudice and aggression toward out-group members who are perceived as a threat to the economic situation of the dominant group. These hate group attacks may be included in thrill-motivated or defensive hate crimes, as stated by Levin and McDevitt (1993)[1]. Thrill-motived hate attacks are committed by groups of bored young adults who attack people who are different in certain socially significant ways for fun and excitement, and to gain, in the process, a sense of power and dominance as well as peer acceptance (Levin & Reichelmann, 2015). But from the perpetrator's point of view, these hate group attacks can be also a response to a perceived threat, such as out-group members who compete for their jobs, who threaten the socio-economic hierarchy of the dominant group.

It is important to comprehend the hate crime phenomenon to not only examine the in-group and out-group conflict, but also to analyze the influence of the individual and psychosocial variables. In terms of psychosocial variables, we found that hate crime

offenders differ significantly in terms of prejudice and aggression from other type of offenders. They display more subtle prejudices and reactive and proactive aggression. In other words, hate crime offenders tend to react aggressively when faced with a perceived threat or aggression, and they also present more hostile cognitive bias. Furthermore, hate crime offenders tend to defend traditional values, to exaggerate cultural differences between the majority and minority groups and deny the outgroup positive emotions.

Our results reveal that subtle prejudices and aggression are strongly correlated in the hate crime group whereas in the non-HC group aggression is associated with social dominance. As expected, subtle and blatant prejudices are highly correlated constructs (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995; Swim et al., 1995). Additionally, hate crime offenders tend to score higher in homophobia, social dominance, and social group orientation than other non-HC offenders, being those variables highly related and associated, only in hate crime offenders, with subtle prejudice. In effect, we found a connection between, on one hand, prejudice and, on the other hand, aggression and social dominance only in the hate crime group, while the rest of correlations remain similar for both groups.

These findings have potential implications for the way in which certain types of hate crime offenders are treated in prison. Since prejudice might account for the fact that hate criminals show more aggression, working with them should be key to therapeutic intervention. Since it is specifically subtle biases that constitute the difference, the approach must be both direct and indirect, as well as transversal throughout the entire program. This is the case in countries such as the United Kingdom and Scotland, where working with prejudice is at the heart of the treatment program carried out in prisons (for a review, see Iganski et al., 2011)

Additionally, and given that the outgroup's perception of threat due to the resource's competition may trigger hate, thus leading to aggressions, working with social emotions, especially hate, should also be an essential part of therapeutic intervention, including actions that improve the emotional abilities of the participants, and develop strategies to cope with group pressure and learn pro-social coping skills for intergroup conflicts. On the other hand, the development of values such as tolerance, equality, and respect must be fundamental in order to try to diminish the tendency toward social dominance of hate criminals. *Diversidad*, which is the rehabilitation program applied to people convicted of hate crimes in Spain, includes work with values and the development of tolerance and respect for human rights as key elements throughout the intervention (Méndez et al., 2019). It would also be advisable to include restorative justice interventions with the objective of developing empathy and promoting reparation for the harm caused. A large body of research supports the use of restorative justice for both minor and serious hate crimes (for review see: Gavrielides, 2012; Kayali & Walters, 2021, Walters, 2014) as well as for other types of serious crimes against people such as gender violence (L. G. Mills et al., 2019) or terrorism crimes in Spain (Varona & Soleto, 2014) and others countries (Staiger, 2009). The results also highlight the need to go beyond psychotherapeutic interventions when working with these aggressors and develop activities that enable inter-group contact to reduce prejudice and social dominance and social group orientation. Thus, the reform program may be

supplemented with sports, cultural activities, etc. that promote the interaction of hate criminals with other people belonging to other groups and cultures. Meta-analytic studies have robustly established the efficacy of intergroup contact in reducing prejudice (e.g., Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006, 2008). Also, previous prison experiences where extremist individuals have been encouraged to develop inter-group contact have yielded interesting results: in Indonesian prisons, through perspective-taking activities, reflective thinking, alternative social identity, intergroup cooperation, and development of alternative goals in people convicted of terrorism, it has been observed that positive contact with exogroup members helps to establish open-mindedness and promote ideological change (Milla et al., 2020). Finally, given the most prevalent sociodemographic profile of this type of criminal (job instability and financial dependence on families) and its links to the crime, education, and job training must also be prioritized in order to improve the employability of those who participate in these programs, with the fundamental support of the penitentiary administration in the application of these activities (Redondo, 2017). Although there doesn't appear to be any studies that specifically point to the importance that families may play in the recidivism of those who have committed hate crimes, the literature on general delinquency does show that the family may be a protective factor that decreases the likelihood of committing new offences and reduces drug use (Brunton-Smith & McCarthy, 2017; A. Mills & Codd, 2008). Based on this premise, it might also be interesting to include work with families in treatment programs for hate offenders.

Based on the results obtained, we can say that reducing the prejudice in hate crime offenders should be a central element of the rehabilitation programs. Prejudice and hate toward the outgroup in conjunction with certain personal characteristics, may lead certain individuals to commit crimes against members of the hated or rejected outgroup. Therefore, conducting interventions whose main goal is to reduce prejudice is essential for the rehabilitation of these offenders. It is well-known that certain types of contact, interactions, and building relationships with members of different cultural groups can reduce the tendency toward stereotypes and prejudice: the contact hypothesis, (Allport, 1954). Additionally, some authors have proposed cognitive methods to reduce automatic negative prejudices in people regarding out-groups, by making them aware of the discrepancies between their real actions (discriminative behaviors) and their pretended (egalitarian) values (Dovidio et al., 2000). Leippe and Eisenstadt (1994) suggest that it would be enough to make people speak or write in public about an attitude contrary to what they actually possess to reduce prejudice. On the other hand, from the recategorization strategy, the model of common endogroup identity (Gaertner et al., 1993) has found consistent evidence that the creation of a larger category that encompasses two groups in conflict can reduce prejudice and discrimination toward members of the former exo-group. Finally, the role of affection and emotions in reducing prejudice and improving inter-group relationships has also been highlighted (Devine & Monteith, 1993; Dovidio et al., 1997; Voils et al., 2002).

Conclusions

This study makes an important contribution to the body of literature on hate crimes, providing empirical results on the characteristics and psychological differences of a sample of convicted hate crime offenders. Our findings highlight the role of prejudices and another psychosocial variables in this type of offenders. But if we are to fully understand hate crimes, other socio-demographic and criminological variables must also be taken into account. These prejudiced beliefs appear in young people who are unemployed and are drawn into hate groups. Therefore, their bias-motivated aggression is fueled by a perceived threat to their economic status and out-group members are used as a scapegoat, or sometimes it is due to the inner dynamics of peer pressure or saving face with like-minded friends or peers who reinforce their prejudice, their social dominance orientation and encourage their aggressive behavior.

Limitations and Future Research

This study has two major limitations which may be addressed in future research. Firstly, the relatively small sample size is problematic, as applied research requires large samples in order to quantify significant effects. Possibly with a larger sample size, a significant difference will be found and its relationship with prejudice and aggression may be examined. A large sample would also allow to differentiate within hate crime offences, within those motivated by racial bias, victim's ethnicity, gender, victim's sexual orientation, religion, or disability.

Despite their high prevalence, hate crimes are still notoriously underreported to the police, so only a small number of hate crime offenders are sentenced. Encouraging hate crime reporting is still a challenge for police and law enforcement agencies (Pezzella, Fetzer, & Keller, 2019).

Furthermore, despite our efforts to have a sample size large enough to be representative of hate crime offenders, the reality is that few prison files are labeled as hate crimes. In many cases, the sentence describes the psychological or the physical attack with the bias motivation, but the prison database identifies the subject as a threat or physical aggression instead of a hate crime. This made the sample selection process very difficult, forcing us eventually to read each sentence directly to distinguish bias-motivated aggressions. In addition, in future studies the compared non-hate group should be carefully selected, with same base crimes but without the biased motivation, to ensure that hate, and not the typology or severity of the offence, is responsible for the differences found between the two groups. In this study, some of the offenders included in the non-hate group, for example those sentenced for sexual offences, may not be the best match for the hate crime offenders. Females also need to be considered in future studies with larger samples to analyze any differences with men.

Another limitation of the research is the way in which the sample was collected. Given the complexity of this criminal phenomenon and the multitude of definitions

of hate crimes, the results obtained should be taken with caution and generalizations should be avoided until these analyses have been replicated with other samples of hate offenders.

The third limitation concerns the measurement of prejudice. As a psychological construct, prejudice has been measured predominantly via psychological tests. Dunbar (1995) summarized the pros and cons of psychological testing when assessing prejudice as an attitude or trait. The author pointed out that many of the measures generally used, in this case the blatant and subtle prejudice test (Pettigrew & Meertens, 1995), are vulnerable to self-presentation bias. In other words, the purpose of the questions may be transparent to the test taker, who may modulate their responses to be more socially acceptable. This is a general phenomenon in Criminal Psychology, but it is especially significant when measuring stereotypes or prejudice, where there is a social pressure to present oneself as not racist or not holding prejudiced beliefs.

Finally, since it is a correlational study, in which there is no manipulation of the independent variables, it is not possible to establish a causal relationship between the variables. However, the results apparently do indicate the importance of prejudice, which can be reduced with appropriate interventions. Other more social and structural variables cannot be modified. As a line of future research, it could be interesting to focus on variables which are possible to influence, and design experimental studies to test the effect of prejudice on aggressiveness.

These limitations should be taken into account when interpreting the results of this study. Future research should address these limitations and make a more detailed analysis of the characteristics and different profiles of hate crime offenders, analyzing how the variables are related, exploring other psychological and criminological variables and identifying the different reasons behind bias-motivated crimes.

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Note

1. This study was revised due to some methodological issues and an improved version was published in 2002.

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