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Prejudice towards Immigrants: The Importance of Social Context, Ideological Postulates, and Perception of Outgroup Threat

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Abstract: Recent years have witnessed a rise in support for political parties with an anti-immigration sentiment and nationalistic rhetoric as their distinguishing traits. Within this context, our study, through a survey, analyses the relation of prejudice toward immigrants with ideological postulates of right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance and outgroup threat. With a sample of 247 individuals (54.7% men and 45.3% women), our results reveal that positions favouring right-wing authoritarianism and social dominance and perception of realistic and symbolic threat have an influence on negative attitudes toward immigrants. At the same time, greater prejudice is found in those individuals scoring high in authoritarianism and symbolic threat. These results confirm, on one hand, the dual process motivation model of ideology and prejudice, and on the other, the bifactor structure of outgroup threat. As a conclusion, we propose that in order to foment peaceful coexistence and reduce hostility towards minority groups within today's social context, it is important to consider the relevance of ideological postulates and outgroup threat. It is a priority to design public policies that favour the inclusion and integration of minority groups with the goal of building more sustainable societies that respect human rights.

Keywords: prejudice; right-wing authoritarianism; social dominance; symbolic threat; realistic threat

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1. Introduction

The western societies of the 21st century are characterized by a high degree of ethnic and multicultural complexity. They are diverse systems in which different religions, nationalities, and cultural patterns, coexist, that is, they share the same community, although this does not imply that there is interrelation between the different groups. Furthermore, not all individuals and groups enjoy the same level of inclusion in the social structure, which can generate rejection towards lower status groups. Because of this, it is required to analyze the social and structural conditions that may hinder intergroup relations, while at the same time develop public policies that promote more sustainable and inclusive societies. These types of societies are characterized by encouraging community participation of all its members (regardless of ethnocultural origin or legal status), promoting intercultural spaces for positive interaction between groups, fostering the proper functioning of institutions, and preventing and regulating possible conflicts that may arise, among other elements. However, in recent years in western societies, there has been a rise of the extreme right that questions the principle of equality of all citizens, emphasizing the idea of the priority and primacy of the national citizens of each of the countries.

In fact, in the past decade the far right has become a political player of the first order in Europe, going from a position of marginalization to being at center stage of the political debate with growing electoral support and impact in the political agendas of their respective countries [1]. It was in the midst of the 2008 economic crisis when

they began to expand to the point of becoming the first or second political force in some countries after 2014. Some examples of these parties are the Freedom Party of Austria, Italy's Northern League, the Danish People's Party, the National Front in France, Greece's Golden Dawn, and Vox in Spain. Although these groups share some similarities with the "traditional extreme right", some notable differences can be observed, fundamentally in their ideological essence [2,3]. The principal ideas of these political groups are nationalism, populism, and authoritarianism [4,5], with the focus of interest on four fundamental axes (with the specification of each country): unemployment, immigration, insecurity, and corruption [6].

Against this current social ideological backdrop, there has been a notable rise in openly xenophobic and racist discourse, with immigration being one of the main battle lines for the extreme right [1,7]. This phenomenon may result in a deterioration of intercultural relations, and more open hostility against immigrants, especially towards those ethnicities related to the Muslim religion. Such expressions of hostility toward minority groups are based on certain ideological postulates: the importance of preserving traditional values, the maintenance of law and order, and the emphasis on some groups being superior to others, for which nationals should have priority access to public resources. At the same time, the anti-immigration discourses stress the idea that immigrants represent a threat to society, because of terrorism, the occupation of jobs, or the distortion of fundamental Western values. The importance of ideological variables and outgroup threat in relation to the prejudice against immigrants is discussed below.

1.1. Ideological Postulates of Ethnocultural Prejudice: Right-Wing Authoritarianism and Social Dominance

One of the main areas of research in the field of political psychology is the concept of political ideology [8]. This construct is a variable that serves to predict behaviors and attitudes on diverse social issues, particularly the expression of different forms of prejudices [9]. Initially, according to Adorno et al. [10], sociopolitical attitudes were considered to be strongly correlated with and organized around a single axis with two extremes: "left" (defender of equality and social changes) and "right" (advocate of inequality and traditionalism). Later, other authors defended the multidimensional character of sociopolitical attitudes [11] considering the concept of right-wing authoritarianism (RWA), proposed by Altemeyer [12,13], and the concept of social dominance orientation (SDO), proposed by Pattro, Sidanius, Stallwort, and Malle [14], as ideological variables that sustain and structure ideology, constituting important predictors of specific political attitudes.

Individuals higher in RWA adhere rigidly to social conventions, firmly comply with authorities perceived as legitimate, and display hostility or violent predisposition towards those who are different or those who violate social norms [15–18]. RWA concerns a tendency to favour tradition over social changes as well as the rejection of groups that challenge traditional values [19,20]. In this sense, different research has shown high positive correlations between RWA and prejudice, discrimination, and hostility towards different exogroups [15,16], especially towards immigrants.

By contrast, SDO refers to the degree to which an individual is in favour of unequal and hierarchical intergroup relations, which implies the defense of anti-egalitarianism as well as support for the active struggle of powerful groups to maintain inequality [14,21]. People oriented towards social dominance show a tendency to legitimize social inequalities, stating that some groups are superior to others and that such inequalities must be maintained for the proper functioning and preservation of the social structure. Thus, several studies have shown that SDO correlates positively with ethnic prejudices, economic and political conservatism (rejection of income redistribution and social welfare and support for a competitive market economy), and a preference for right-wing parties [14,22].

People who defend the existence of relations of dominance of some groups over others assume, to a large extent, one of the legitimizing myths of the maintenance of the hierarchical structure in society, similar to racism [14]. Ethnic prejudices based on SDO may derive from the need to justify the maintenance of societal inequalities that favor certain

individuals and groups. However, it would be the intergroup relations, in which intergroup status differences are shown, that would lead a good part of the subjects of the dominant groups to assume discriminatory attitudes towards the dominated groups, and that, in turn, these would try to establish resistance strategies with the aim of changing the status imposed by the dominant groups [23]. The myths of domination created by the dominant groups and how these have been influential in the relations with subordinate groups have been supported by narratives that show supposed relations marked by structural inequality between these ethnic groups, narratives that at the same time favor its perpetuation [24].

Various studies have analyzed the relationship between RWA and SDO [25–27]. Research has shown that RWA and SDO are relatively independent predictors of ethnic prejudice [17,28] although both variables complement each other [29] by conforming a dual process motivation model of ideology and prejudice. The existence of an authoritarianism-based prejudice has been demonstrated, conceptualized as an uncritical acceptance of prejudicial statements of authorities towards specific outgroups, and a dominance-oriented prejudice conceptualized as hierarchical intergroup relations.

1.2. Prejudice and Perception of Outgroup Threat

From the classical perspective of social psychology, prejudice has been considered a negative attitude towards exogroups. However, there is no consensus in this regard, and different authors have highlighted the important role of emotions in intergroup relations [30]. The theory of intergroup emotions [31] holds that the behavioral reactions we show toward groups derive from our emotions toward those groups, which in turn depend on the evaluations we make of those groups based on our social identity. According to Cottrell and Neuberg [32], perceiving that the members of the exogroup threaten issues that are important to the ingroup may generate negative emotions towards them. As such, when people perceive that members of other groups challenge or threaten elements they hold to be of value, they feel outgroup hostility. Because of that, the outgroup threat is a variable that carries out an important role in understanding intergroup relations and conflicts [33–36]. In fact, outgroup threat has been analyzed in diverse theories as a variable that explains and predicts prejudice towards immigrants [37–39].

The integrated threat theory holds that perception of threat plays a key role in intergroup attitudes and is a predictive variable of prejudice in a variety of social contexts [40–42]. The threat is not only related to material aspects, but also can affect more symbolic matters related to social identity. The theory distinguishes between two types of threat: realistic and symbolic. The first one entails perceived competition between the ingroup and the outgroup for scarce resources, for example, education, job market or healthcare [43]. This perception of competition can be real or imagined, so more than the real threat it is the subjective perception influencing the prejudice. The theory's latest revisions also include as a realistic threat a specific type related to the perception of physical or material harm to a member of the group, for example, personal safety [41]. Symbolic threat refers to the perception of the differences in the values and beliefs held by the members of the outgroup. It is a threat focused on the world view, together with the fear of losing customs, language or the values of the ingroup as a consequence of intergroup interaction [38]. Numerous studies based on the threat theory and its different reformulations have confirmed that outgroup threat, whether realistic or symbolic, triggers negative attitudes towards the outgroup [42,44]. Accordingly, viewing the outgroup as constituting a threat to the identity of the group itself or to its status might increase prejudice [45,46].

Stephan, Ybarra, Martínez, Schwarzwald, and Tur-Kaspa [47] held that the degree to which each type of threat is related to prejudice depends to a large extent on the nature of the relation between the groups considered. In this way, the social context in which said relation is produced, including the policies of the host country and public opinion towards immigrants, determines the relation and the specific types of threats. At the same time, the ideologies, shaped by beliefs that promote dominance of some groups over others [48] or a cultural world view, having the belief that one's own customs are superior to those of

other groups [49], constitute important factors when predicting attitudes towards other groups, since they lead to a generalized belief about intergroup competition [50]. Along these lines, the realistic conflict theory, one of the classic theories in social psychology for explaining prejudice, points out that in situations of negative interdependence where two groups compete to obtain scarce resources, antipathy towards members of the outgroup is enhanced, and along with it, intergroup conflict [51].

1.3. The Present Study

This study is carried out in Spain, a country to which a significant number of immigrants arrive. The percentage of its inhabitants that are of foreign origin is 13.01% [52],. The main country of origin is Morocco [52]. At the same time, Spain is a country which was deeply affected by the world economic crisis of 2008, with its unemployment rate reaching 27.1% in 2013 [53], one of the highest in the European Union. Although in the following years there was a recovery of the job market, currently the Coronavirus disease 2019 (COVID-19) health crisis has again generated an increase in the unemployment rate, which stands at 16.13%. At the same time, 46% of the population believes the economic situation is bad or very bad, and 32.5% think it will be worse in a year's time. With respect to the country's main problems, 60.2% point to unemployment and 8.5% to immigration [54]. Regarding the political situation, the party representing the extreme right has grown exponentially in the past two years, going from having no parliamentary representation to becoming the third political force in the country with 15.09% of the vote [55].

In a social and political context such as the present, understanding the complex intergroup relationships and the factors that can lead to more prejudicial attitudes towards immigrants becomes a crucial objective. Accordingly, in this study, we sought to determine how ideological attitudes of RWA and SDO and outgroup threat (realistic and symbolic) influence the prejudice that the native population feels towards immigrants. Our established objectives were the following: (1) to study the relation between RWA, SDO, and outgroup threat (realistic and symbolic) and prejudice towards immigrants; (2) to analyze if the degree of acceptance of RWA and SDO ideological attitudes and outgroup threat (realistic and symbolic) had an influence on having greater prejudice; (3) to determine if the interaction between RWA and symbolic threat, on one hand, and the interaction between SDO and realistic threat on the other, involved greater prejudice toward immigrants in the native population. The hypotheses formulated are the following:

Hypothesis 1. *It was expected that individuals who scored high in RWA would show greater prejudice toward immigrants. Expressions of prejudice in right-wing authoritarian individuals towards groups perceived by them as different and threatening, such as immigrants, have been observed in previous studies [13,16].*

Hypothesis 2. *It was expected that individuals scoring high in SDO would feel greater negative prejudice toward immigrants. In this sense, Sidanius and Pratto [21] observed that individuals with an orientation towards social dominance tend to show negative attitudes of prejudice towards outgroups with an ideological background such as racism.*

Hypothesis 3. *It was expected that individuals who felt a higher degree of realistic threat from immigrants would feel greater prejudice towards them. Thus, when individuals perceive this competition for resources, determining that their well-being could be at risk (or that of their ingroup) negative feelings toward the outgroup increase [36,56].*

Hypothesis 4. *It was expected that those individuals who feel a higher degree of symbolic threat from immigrants would show greater negative feelings towards them. The importance of this type of threat in regard to prejudice was put forward by the integrated threat theory [41,42] and by later studies [57].*

Hypothesis 5. *It was postulated that when participants presented at the same time high scores in RWA and symbolic threat, levels of prejudice towards immigrants would increase. Prejudice based on authoritarianism is fostered by fear and feelings of outgroup threat to the social order [11,17]. As such, if immigrants are perceived to put traditional values and social norms at risk at the same time that authoritarian principles are accepted, it will generate an attitude of greater prejudice towards them.*

Hypothesis 6. *It was expected that when individuals had scores high in SDO and realistic threat, they would show more prejudicial attitudes towards immigrants. Prejudice based on social dominance is fostered by power struggle, dominance and group superiority [21,27]. Accordingly, if individuals perceive that they are competing with immigrants for different resources, and at the same time they accept principles of social dominance, a greater attitude of prejudice towards immigrants will be generated.*

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Participants

The participants in this research were 247 people, of whom 45.3% were women and 54.7% men. The average age was 38.66 (*DT*: 14.02). With regard to level of education, 38.2% had university studies, 26.9% had high school studies, 17.2% had vocational school training, and 17.6% had grade school education. With respect to their employment status, 36.3% held a job, 31% were unemployed or looking for a job with better conditions, and 32.7% did not have a job, but were not actively involved in a job search. Regarding social class, the majority saw themselves as middle class (75.3%). As for political stance, half of those answering the questionnaire placed themselves in the political center, 4.34 (*DT*: 1.71) on a scale of 1 (Extreme Left) to 9 (Extreme Right).

2.2. Instruments

Sociodemographic questionnaire. This section included questions about socio-demographic characteristics such as gender, age, education level, employment situation, perceived social class, and political stance.

Questionnaire regarding RWA. The questionnaire used was the Spanish version by Núñez-Alarcón, Moreno-Jiménez, and Moral-Toranzo [58] of the one devised by Manganelli-Rattazzi, Bobbio, and Canova [59]. This questionnaire is a reduced version of the RWA scale [15]. It is composed of 14 items with scores ranging from 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). An example of an item on this scale is "Crime and immorality show that we must respond firmly if we are to preserve our morals and maintain law and order". A Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 was obtained.

Questionnaire regarding SDO. The Spanish version [60] of the scale developed by Pratto et al. [14] was used. This scale consists of 16 items with scores ranging from 1 to 7 (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). An example of an item is "The value of some groups of people is greater than that of others". A Cronbach's alpha of 0.88 was obtained.

Scale regarding perception of outgroup threat. In order to measure outgroup threat, the EPAE [61] was used. It is made up of a total of 13 items with scores ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = not at all; 5 = very much so) that evaluate two factors: realistic threat (9 items) and symbolic threat (4 items). The items refer to the degree to which the subjects feel the following elements are endangered by immigrants: educational values, family values, religious beliefs, and cultural traditions for symbolic threat; access to employment, the healthcare system, the educational system, the public benefits system, economic stability, personal safety, public order and national security for realistic threat. A Cronbach's Alpha of 0.83 was obtained for symbolic threat and one of 0.85 for realistic threat.

Prejudice. A scale of emotions was used [62] made up of 10 items with scores ranging from 1 to 5 (1 = not at all; 5 = very much so) to measure the component of an attitude of prejudice towards immigrants through negative emotions such as fear, unease or hate. A Cronbach's Alpha of 0.93 was obtained.

2.3. Procedure

The data were gathered by students in the Psychology PhD program in the School of Psychology and Speech Therapy at the University of Malaga. The snow-ball sampling method [63] was used to recruit participants, starting from the students' own contacts. The questionnaire was always hand-delivered and answered in person. The requirements were to be over 18 years of age and to live in the autonomous community of Andalusia. Participants were given a brief introduction to the main goals of the study. The questionnaire was anonymous, and respondents were assured of the confidentiality of the data. All participants signed an informed consent form. Response time varied between 15 and 20 min. When finished, the participants were given a statement to read explaining the specific research objectives. If needed, they could request additional information by e-mail to the senior researcher of the project. The protocol study was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University of Malaga (Spain) as part of the project 18-B3-02.

2.4. Statistical Analysis

SPSS v23.0 statistical software (SPSS Inc., Chicago, IL, USA) was used to perform the data analysis in this study. First, the reliability of each of the scales used was calculated. Then, the descriptive statistics (average and typical deviation) and the correlation between variables were measured. Finally, a hierarchical regression analysis was carried out through the PROCESS macro for SPSS [64].

3. Results

The descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) and the correlation between variables are presented in Table 1. The results showed medium–low levels for RWA, SDO, and prejudice, and medium levels for realistic threat and symbolic threat. Regarding the relations between the variables, it can be observed that they were positive in the sense that the greater the prejudice toward immigrants, the higher the levels of RWA ($r = 0.32$; $p < 0.01$), SDO ($r = 0.32$; $p < 0.01$), realistic threat ($r = 0.46$; $p < 0.01$), and symbolic threat ($r = 0.39$; $p < 0.01$). Likewise, positive correlations were obtained between RWA and SDO ($r = 0.44$; $p < 0.01$) and realistic threat and symbolic threat ($r = 0.50$; $p < 0.01$).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and Pearson's correlations.

	M	*DT*	RWA	SDO	Symbolic Threat	Realistic Threat
RWA (1–7)	2.46	0.67				
SDO (1–7)	1.85	0.59	0.448 *			
Symbolic Threat (1–5)	2.26	1.09	0.309 *	0.336 *		
Realistic Threat (1–5)	2.43	1.14	0.303 *	0.304 *	0.507 *	
Prejudice (1–5)	1.7	0.77	0.329 *	0.320 *	0.460 *	0.399 *

Notes: RWA: Ring-Wing Authoritarianism; SDO: Social Dominance Orientation; * $p < 0.01$.

The hierarchical regression analysis to explain prejudice is presented in Table 2,using as predictor variables RWA, SDO, realistic threat and symbolic threat and prejudice as the criterion variables ($R^2c = 0.268$; $F_{(4, 231)} = 18.09$, $p = 0.001$). Preliminary analyses indicated that the predictor variables lacked multicollinearity, with a variance inflation factor (VIF) value of 1.41.

In Step 1, we entered RWA, SDO, symbolic threat, and realistic threat. Participants showed greater prejudice if they (a) were high in RWA, $\beta = 0.180$, $t = 2.61$, $p = 0.01$; (b) high in SDO, $\beta = 0.158$, $t = 1.84$, $p = 0.027$; (c) high in symbolic threat, $\beta = 0.352$, $t = 5.37$, $p = 0.001$ and (d) high in realistic threat $\beta = 0.195$, $t = 1.92$, $p = 0.031$. Hence, the model accounted for 25.5% of the variance, so these four variables were explanatory variables of prejudice.

Table 2. Multiple regression analysis of prejudice.

		β	t	p
Step 1				
	RWA	0.180	2.61	0.010
	SDO	0.158	1.94	0.027
	Symbolic Threat	0.352	5.37	0.001
	Realistic Threat	0.195	1.92	0.031
	$R^2c = 0.252$			
Step 2				
	RWA × SymbolicThreat	0.139	2.28	0.023
	SDO × Realistic Threat	0.105	0.893	0.078
	$\Delta R^2c = 0.16$			

Notes: RWA: Ring-Wing Authoritarianism; SDO: Social Dominance Orientation.

In Step 2 we included the interactions between RWA and symbolic threat and between SDO and realistic threat. There was a significant interaction between RWA and symbolic threat, $\beta = 0.139$, $t = 2.28$, $p = 0.002$, representing an increase of 1.6% of explained variance. However, the interaction between SDO and realistic threat was not significant. The process suggested by Aiken and Wets [65] was followed in order to examine the interaction between RWA and symbolic threat. The test of simple slopes revealed that the symbolic threat of the participants predicted higher prejudice towards immigrants when they scored high in RWA (+1 SD), $\beta = 0.42$, $t = 4.53$, $p = 0.001$, but not when they scored low in RWA (−1 SD), $\beta = 0.110$, $t = 1.30$, $p = 0.19$. That is, when the participants accepted to a greater degree the RWA principles, they showed greater prejudice towards immigrants only when they scored high in symbolic threat (Figure 1).

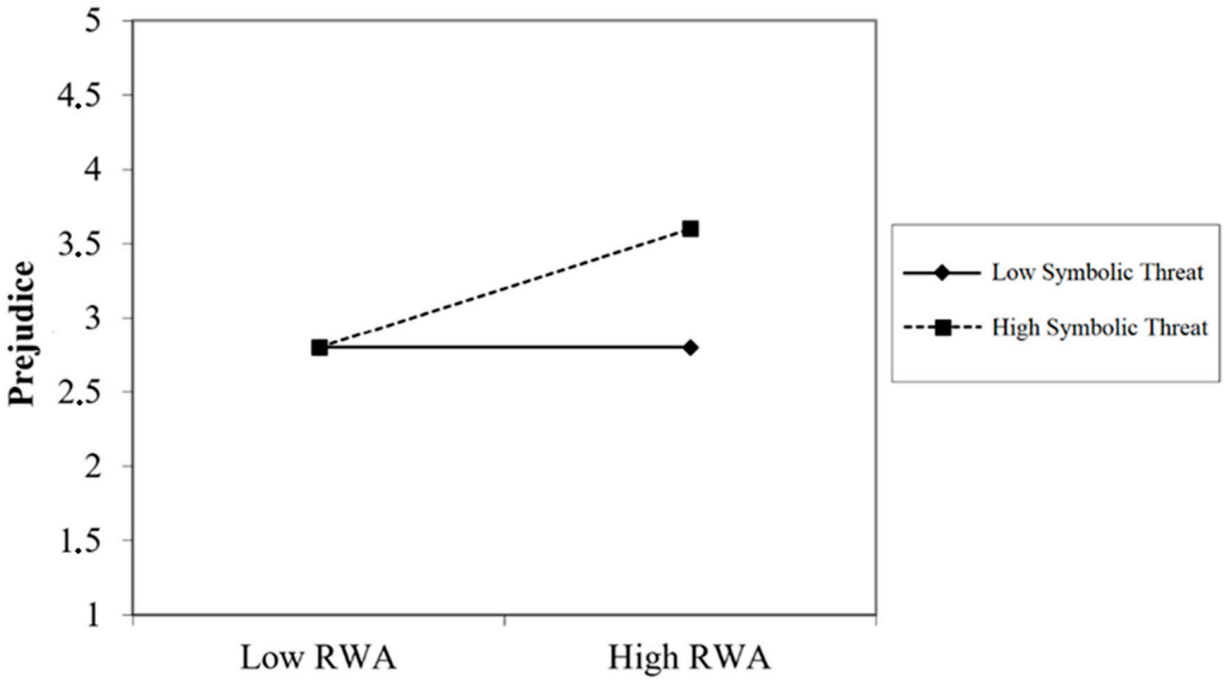

Figure 1. Interaction between RWA and Symbolic Threat on Prejudice.

4. Discussion

In this research, we have attempted to uncover the relation between ideological variables (RWA and SDO), outgroup threat (realistic and symbolic threat), and prejudice toward immigrants. The global rise of the extreme right with openly racist discourse, in which immigrants (especially if they are illegal immigrants and from ethnocultural backgrounds that are associated with the Muslim religion) are blamed for some of society's

main problems (unemployment, citizen insecurity, diminished access to public services, among others), shows the clear need to address these ideological variables, the perception of threat, and the emotion felt toward the outgroup in order to understand intergroup relations in multicultural contexts. As pointed out by Stephan et al. [47], the social context and public opinion towards immigrants condition the relation between the groups and the perception of threat felt by the host society.

In our study we have been able to verify that, as we postulated in Hypothesis 1, individuals that assume RWA ideological positions show a higher degree of prejudice towards immigrants. Such individuals give a great deal of importance to social order, traditional values, and societal norms, displaying hostility toward groups that endanger these elements. Several earlier studies revealed high correlations of prejudice and hostility with RWA [17,66]. At the same time, according to Duckitt and Sibley [18], individuals who defend conservatism, the social order and adherence to norms, are more sensitive to perception of threat from outgroups. Right-wing authoritarians display prejudice towards groups that are perceived as culturally different and socially threatening [13,67]. In this sense, we can say that those anti-immigration discourses that, from an ethnocentric outlook, emphasize the idea that the presence of foreigners puts the society's essential values into jeopardy, are accompanied by an attitude of hostility toward the outgroup, developing negative sentiments towards immigrants.

On the other hand, according to the results obtained and in accordance with the results of previous studies [21,22,68,69], we can determine that Hypothesis 2 is confirmed. In this sense, those persons who are seen to be in favour of social hierarchy and the superiority of some groups over others, that is, those scoring high in SDO, display greater prejudice towards immigrants. There are different studies [22,27,70] that suggest that people who subscribe to the dominant ideological postulates are reinforced by prejudicial beliefs towards minorities, which take the form of support for conservative policies and sympathy for right-wing parties.

With respect to Hypotheses 3 and 4, our results confirm that people who feel a higher degree of threat, both realistic (competition for resources) as well as symbolic (ingroup world-view and values), show greater hostility and negative sentiment towards immigrants. Outgroup threat is sustained by the fact that members of a certain group (host society) believe or expect that members of the other groups (immigrants) will behave in a prejudicial way towards them, putting the goals and well-being of the group itself into jeopardy [71]. In this sense, as pointed out by Silván-Ferrero and Bustillos [46], for some groups, the emphasis on threat justifies maintaining inequalities and might become an excuse for justifying prejudice. As such, in accordance with the revised psycho-social literature [35,36,72–75] the perception of outgroup threat appears closely linked to the prejudice expressed toward the immigrant outgroup. Different researches in this regard have corroborated the relation between hostility towards minority groups with realistic threat [37,42,43,76] and with symbolic threat [77,78].

Regarding the interaction between RWA and symbolic threat, our results allow us to confirm Hypothesis 5. Namely, individuals scoring high in RWA and symbolic threat are those who project more negative sentiments towards the outgroup. The individuals that accept authoritarian ideology show prejudice towards those groups that can change the social order because of the former's desire to maintain social cohesion, security, and the values which they judge to be important [15,67]. For that reason, when they perceive a threat of the symbolic type from an immigrant group, on the understanding that they endanger norms, values and traditions, whilst defending the ideology based on authoritarian postulates, is when the greatest hostility and prejudice is produced. It must be highlighted that this type of threat related to right-wing authoritarianism is not internal or individual but is instead external and social [79,80]. Thus, prejudice based on authoritarianism is fomented by fear and the feeling of threat that exogroups may pose to the social order [11,17].

With respect to Hypothesis 6, that is to say, that people who agree with the postulates of the SDO and at the same time feel higher levels of realistic threat would be more prejudiced,

the results do not confirm this hypothesis. This fact could be due to a difference between the assessment that individuals make of the economic situation and immigration in general and what actually affects them personally. That is, according to the CIS [54], 46% of the Spanish population thinks that the economic situation of the country is bad or very bad, but this percentage drops to 16.7% if respondents are asked about their personal situation. Similarly, 8.5% point to immigration as the main problem of the country in general, but only 1% indicate that it is the problem affecting them most personally. Thus, the sample of higher levels of prejudice in people that defend the SDO principles and perceive a realistic threat from immigrants may be conditioned by the perception of personal competition for resources and the conflict with this group according to their situation. In this sense, we observe that in our study, 30% of those surveyed were unemployed or looking for a job with better conditions, a situation that might lead them to show higher levels of prejudice towards immigrants as a consequence of the perception of their own competition for resources if they defend ideological principles of dominance.

The results obtained in this study have shown that, although RWA and SDO are related variables [25–27,81,82], they are independent predictors of prejudice [17,28]. As established by Duckitt [83], both ideological variables participate in the formation of negative attitudes towards social groups, but this participation is not symmetric. For Wlodarczyk et al. [69] (p. 30) "while SDO would act essentially towards those groups perceived as competitive (subordinate), RWA would be related to those groups perceived as threatening (deviant)". Likewise, the results confirm the bifactor structure of the outgroup threat that, although related to one another, they constitute independent dimensions [40,41,61].

Regarding the limitations of the study, we must point out that this research used immigrants as a target of prejudice in a generic sense. As such, we have attempted to assess the relation of the ideological variables and the perception of outgroup threat, simulating the anti-immigration discourses that are getting increasing support in society, which are being used by parties of the extreme right with prejudiced and generalizing phrases such as "immigrants are endangering our fundamental values and traditions", "we will not allow ourselves to be invaded by illegal immigrants" or "jobs must first go to people from here, not to immigrants". Nevertheless, the prejudices held are not rigid and inflexible, but specific to the social context in which they are produced and the groups involved [84], that is, different emotional responses are produced depending on the ethno-cultural origin of the immigrant. Those studies that have addressed stereotypes under the generic category "immigrants" have reported a negative assessment of the outgroup in general [85,86]. However, recent studies have shown that the assessment and the emotions experienced in intergroup relations depend on the group in question under consideration [87,88]. Stated in another way, the intergroup assessments and the emotional responses are a reflection of the complex dynamics that are produced within the social context, dependent on socio-structural variables among which perceived social status of the different groups can be highlighted. Likewise, future studies should consider if there are different perceptions of immigrants depending on their administrative status, for example, whether they are regular or irregular immigrants.

The consideration of distinguishing between different immigrant groups in future lines of research is also of importance in relation to outgroup threat. In this way, although realistic threat and symbolic threat are related [41,42], it is also possible that the type of threat provoked by different immigrant groups in the host society are different, with some groups provoking a feeling of threat based on competition for resources and others based on the perception that they endanger values and customs. As an example, some studies [33,89] describe how Asian Americans (recognized as a competitive and efficient group among whites in the U.S.) are considered a source of realistic threat but not a symbolic one, as they are thought to share similar values. In contrast, several studies point out that the European and the North American population fundamentally perceive a symbolic threat from Muslims, due mainly to their supposed lack of integration [77,90] and their position on women [91].

For future research lines, not only should different immigrant groups be taken into account, but also the status attributed to each of these groups together with personal position in the social hierarchy, measured, for example, by economic situation or employment. Furthermore, the degree of identification with the ingroup should also be considered since some studies [33,92,93] have pointed to this factor as a moderating variable in symbolic threat and realistic threat. In addition to individual and group variables that explain prejudice towards immigrants, it is also necessary to take into consideration variables of the social context. In this sense, for example, Andalusia, where the research was carried out, has certain characteristics that may not be extrapolated to other contexts. For example, it was the first region in Spain where the extreme right gained representation in an autonomic election, which was held in 2018.

On the other hand, although the foreign population in Andalusia is around 8%, in provinces such as Almeria or Malaga (the province where the data were collected), it represents 15 to 20%, with the majority nationality being Moroccan [94].

These characteristics can determine how intergroup relations form the perception towards minorities and the level of prejudice towards immigrants.

5. Conclusions

This paper aims to contribute to types of variables that are related to prejudice towards immigrants. Our societies are becoming increasingly multicultural and diverse, but different ideological essences based on inequality and conservatism foster the perception that exogroups may jeopardize the social order. An analysis of the socio-political context can help us to understand what is behind certain ideological postulates in order to respond to them and contribute to the construction of sustainable and plural societies. In this study, we have been able to verify that the perception of threat (realistic and symbolic) and authoritarian and dominant ideological principles are explanatory variables for prejudice. Furthermore, it has been confirmed that when individuals have an authoritarian orientation and believe that immigrants put values, customs, and traditions at risk, that is, when their world view is endangered, the greater the prejudice present. That said, we must take into consideration that, although emotions are experienced at the individual level, they are also shared by groups and activate frameworks in which certain behavior becomes more likely [95]. In fact, the theory of intergroup emotions [31] sustains that emotions are functionally social reactions to events that have consequences through the activation and acceptation of a certain social identity. In this regard, we must note that the anti-immigration discourses used by right-wing parties operating under a common social identity and based on ideological principles of authoritarianism and social dominance are growing in acceptance among the population. These discourses foster a sense of danger and threat to the ingroup, generating greater hostility and prejudice towards minority groups. As social scientists, we must study if the rise of the extreme right carries with it greater hostility and group conflict that lead to an erosion of peaceful coexistence, or if, on the contrary, this scenario makes society develop overriding strategies and responses that foment equality, respect, and positive relations between groups, in other words, societies that are sustainable and that respect human rights.

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