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Honor Concerns, Ambivalent Sexism and IPV Victimization in Italian and Turkish Samples: Country and Gender Differences

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ABSTRACT

Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) is a significant global public health issue. Its prevalence and social acceptance exhibit substantial variation across cultural contexts. Cultural belief systems, such as honor culture and ambivalent sexism, have been identified as significant factors shaping gender roles and attitudes toward violence in intimate relationships. However, the intersection of honor culture, ambivalent sexism, and IPV victimization remains underexplored in cross-cultural research. The current study examines country and gender differences in Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) victimization, honor culture, and ambivalent sexism through a cross-cultural comparison of Italian and Turkish university students. A battery of self-report measures was administered to 1249 Italian and Turkish university students aged 18–25 (55.7% female, 44.3% male). A 2×2 MANOVA was conducted to assess the effects of gender and country on IPV victimization, honor concerns, and ambivalent sexism. Results showed no significant main effect of gender on IPV victimization. However, a significant main effect of culture emerged: univariate analyses revealed that Turkish students reported higher levels of IPV victimization compared to their Italian peers ($p < 0.001$). Significant gender and country differences were also found in honor concerns, with a gender $\times$ culture interaction indicating that patterns of honor endorsement varied across countries. Moreover, Turkish males and females reported higher levels of both benevolent and hostile sexism compared to their Italian counterparts. These findings underscore the relevance of both gender and cultural context on experiences and attitudes related to IPV, honor, and sexism. The results support and extend previous research, highlighting the importance of incorporating cultural variables when addressing intimate partner violence. Implications, limitations, and future research directions are discussed.

1 | Introduction

Intimate partner violence (IPV) refers to behaviors within an intimate relationship, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors that cause physical, sexual, or psychological harm (WHO 2021). It can occur in both heterosexual and same-sex relationships and may

be perpetrated by men against women, or vice versa. However, numerous studies have indicated that IPV is more commonly perpetrated by men against women (Ellsberg et al. 2008; Stewart et al. 2013). Today, IPV is even considered a global public health issue of epidemic proportions and is considered the most common form of violence against women (WHO 2021). Globally, 27% of women aged 15–49 reported having experienced violence by

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Key Points

1. This study examined gender and country differences in IPV victimization, honor concerns, and ambivalent sexism among Italian and Turkish university students.
2. Country differences emerged in psychological aggression, physical assault, honor concerns, and ambivalent sexism.
3. Gender differences were observed in honor concerns, benevolent sexism, and hostile sexism but not in IPV victimization.
4. The findings highlight the importance of country and gender-related beliefs in understanding IPV and informing culturally sensitive prevention strategies.

a current or former male intimate partner at least once in their lifetime. Notably, 26% of women aged 19–24 years have already experienced IPV at least once (Sardinha et al. 2022).

Despite being a widespread human rights issue, cross-cultural studies have revealed considerable variations in IPV victimization across different cultures and countries. For example, while some European countries report IPV prevalence rates as low as 10%–15%, rates in parts of Asia, Africa, and South America often exceed 40% (Rajkumar 2023; WHO 2021). Researchers have linked this variation to multiple factors, including national income level, child marriage rates, educational access, and justice system efficacy for women (Sardinha et al. 2024). Moreover, IPV is more frequent in societies characterized by high gender inequality and rigid, stereotypical gender roles (Gerino et al. 2018; Moreira and Pinto da Costa 2020; Yakubovich et al. 2018).

Sociocultural norms reinforce and normalize IPV through violent socialization within families and communities (Delaney 2023). For instance, researchers found that participants from Asian countries endorsed beliefs that were more supportive of male dominance, jealousy, hostility toward women, and acceptance of violence—factors closely tied to patriarchal social structures that institutionalize gender hierarchies—more often than their European counterparts (Ozaki and Otis 2017).

Further research has supported the idea that collectivist cultures are associated with greater use of psychological IPV (Ummak et al. 2022) and that individuals living in politically conservative countries or those high in vertical collectivism tend to endorse more traditional and hierarchical gender beliefs (Bugay et al. 2021).

Religious norms, as part of sociocultural systems, have also been shown to influence IPV prevalence, with some individuals using religion to justify male authority and female subordination within intimate relationships (Adjei and Mpiani 2022; Turan 2020). Perpetrators may appeal to prescriptive religious norms to legitimize their control, while victims may cite religious prohibitions against divorce as reasons for remaining in abusive relationships (Adjei and Mpiani 2022). Cross-cultural studies have also suggested that in some Muslim-majority contexts, the justification of IPV is more common compared to Western norms

(Jayasundara et al. 2014), and Muslim women may experience higher rates of IPV than non-Muslim or Christian women (Dalal et al. 2012; Yount and Li 2010).

While the specific forms of IPV vary by country, evidence consistently shows that traditional gender roles significantly increase IPV risk. Traditional social structures that associate women with obedience and weakness, and men with power and control, are associated with higher levels of partner violence (Cabras et al. 2020; Yilmaz 2018).

Some scholars argue for gender symmetry in IPV victimization. For instance, some studies have shown no significant gender differences in past-year or lifetime IPV victimization, including frequency (Capinha et al. 2024). Similarly, others have reported gender symmetry in psychological and physical IPV but not in sexual violence (Chen and Chan 2021). However, a substantial body of research continues to show significant gender effects in IPV victimization. Women's adherence to traditional gender norms is associated with increased IPV risk across multiple countries (Hatun and Fidan 2024), and women consistently report higher rates of victimization than men (Arnosso et al. 2022; Cunningham and Anderson 2023; Muñoz-Galiano et al. 2024). Additionally, the male gender is generally associated with a higher likelihood of perpetration and lower likelihood of victimization, whereas women show greater vulnerability to IPV (Clemens et al. 2023). Recent research has emphasized that when IPV is measured across the life course, women not only experience it more frequently and severely than men but also tend to report multiple perpetrators, especially during adolescence and young adulthood (Cunningham and Anderson 2023). Women are also more likely to experience repeated and severe forms of IPV, while men often minimize their experiences and the resulting consequences (Fanslow et al. 2023; Yakubovich et al. 2019).

1.1 | Theoretical Framework

According to the socio-ecological model (Bronfenbrenner 1979; Cañete et al. 2024; Hardesty and Ogolsky 2020), IPV is conceptualized as a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interaction between individual, relational, community, and sociocultural factors (Armah-Ansah et al. 2025; Ogolsky et al. 2025). The socio-ecological perspective, in line with the feminist theories on gender-based violence, conceptualizes IPV as rooted in patriarchal social structures and a consequence of gender inequality, sustained by cultural beliefs and myths that legitimize violence against women (Rollero and De Piccoli 2020).

In particular, at the societal level, the patriarchal systems organize inequality resources, opportunities, and impact on cultural norms that constrain women's autonomy and sustain the acceptance of violence within intimate relationships (Armah-Ansah et al. 2025; De Coster and Heimer 2021; Ogolsky et al. 2025).

At the sociocultural level, honor culture represents a specific set of cultural norms and scripts regulating social behavior through public reputation, shame, and gendered expectations, particularly emphasizing the control of women's sexuality as a central component of family and masculine honor (Vandello

and Cohen 2003). Cultural systems may also incorporate religious norms, as powerful tools capable of shaping individuals' lives and social behaviors (Adjei and Mpiani 2022). Specifically, religion frequently provides prescriptions on gender norms in both the public and private spheres and may contribute to the normalization and justification of violence within intimate relationships.

Cultural norms and societal contexts play a crucial role in shaping individual attitudes, as shared norms may provide guidelines for behavior and influence individuals' perceptions and evaluations of intimate partner violence (Hayes and Pinchevsky 2023). At the individual level, attitudes such as ambivalent sexism (Glick and Fiske 1996) have been shown to be associated with the perpetuation of a culture of violence against women (Agadullina et al. 2022). Specifically, at the attitudinal level, ambivalent sexism has been related to beliefs and myths that justify violence. At the behavioral level, it is linked to aggression and violent behaviors against women.

Through socialization processes, societies promote gender and cultural norms across multiple domains, which may become internalized as self-standards that regulate behaviors (Eagly and Wood 2012) and potentially normalize violence (Delaney 2023). However, mere familiarity with cultural norms does not necessarily imply behavioral enactment. Rather, norms are more likely to shape conduct when they are internalized and integrated into individuals' motivational systems, identity, and memory networks as personally meaningful beliefs (Maltseva 2015). In this sense, the cultural norms concerning appropriate male and female behavior may also operate implicitly, influencing judgments and responses through automatically activated processes, leading to a discrepancy between explicit rejection of violence and implicit acceptance of the cultural norms that sustain it (Vandello and Cohen 2003). Furthermore, although sexist attitudes have been linked with beliefs that justify male-to-female violence, their translation into violent behavior is not necessarily direct. In fact, violent conduct is also shaped by multiple interacting factors, including the physical and psychological state of the potential aggressor, attitudes toward violence, and broader social norms (Agadullina et al. 2022).

Although honor-related cultural norms and sexist attitudes should not be considered as the sole or sufficient causes of IPV victimization, they represent significant risk factors operating within a broader multilevel system. Consequently, investigating these variables across different cultural and gender contexts represents a crucial preliminary step toward clarifying the role that these variables may play in IPV victimization.

1.2 | IPV Victimization and Honor Culture: Gender and Country Differences

A growing body of research suggests that cultural norms related to honor significantly shape attitudes toward IPV and contribute to cross-cultural differences in its prevalence (Bulut and Yildirim 2018; Ceylan-Batur et al. 2023; Gengler et al. 2021; Gul et al. 2021; Zark and Satyen 2022). Honor culture is traditionally associated with Mediterranean societies (e.g., Italy,

Greece, and Spain), the Middle East, Arab countries, Latin and South America, and the southern United States (Vandello and Cohen 2003).

However, recent cross-cultural findings demonstrate that honor cultures are not limited to Mediterranean regions; their presence and influence vary widely across Europe and in several non-Mediterranean countries (Vignoles et al. 2024). Honor cultures are distributed across societies with distinct religious and cultural backgrounds, suggesting that honor is embedded in broader cultural logics, rather than confined to specific geographic regions. In individualistic societies, honor tends to emphasize integrity, honesty, and self-expression. In contrast, collectivistic cultures associate honor with family reputation, social status, and interpersonal harmony.

Social psychologists have further distinguished between cultural models of honor. Literature identifies three different cultural typologies: face cultures (e.g., Japan and Hong Kong), dignity cultures (e.g., North America), and honor cultures (e.g., Spain and Turkey) (Kim et al. 2010; Leung and Cohen 2011). The main distinction between the three typologies of cultures is in the way that personal value is defined and maintained (Smith et al. 2021). Specifically, in the dignity cultures, personal value is based primarily on the intrinsic values. In the honor culture, personal value is influenced by both self-perception and external recognition and social reputation. Conversely, in the face culture, personal value is entirely related to social position and compliance with collective expectations. The literature shows that sociocultural factors such as family structure, dominant religion, social organization, and legal systems all influence how violence related to honor is perceived across cultures labeled as "honor cultures" (Caffaro et al. 2016).

Various studies have confirmed that traditional religious values (Bugay et al. 2021), family dynamics, gender, birthplace, rural residence, and education level (Doğan et al. 2023) significantly affect perceptions and management of honor-related issues. Honor is closely linked to gender roles and gender-specific honor codes that define "appropriate" behavior for men and women (Rodriguez-Mosquera 2011; Rodriguez Mosquera 2016). Feminine honor is typically associated with values such as modesty, sexual propriety, and decorum, while masculine honor emphasizes strength, toughness, and authority.

Findings on gender differences in honor concerns are mixed. While several studies indicate that men generally endorse honor-related norms more strongly than women (Canto et al. 2017; Malayeri et al. 2024), others show that women also internalize honor culture values (Glick et al. 2016). Gender differences appear more pronounced in countries with stronger honor traditions. Gul and Schuster (2020) found that Turkish men endorsed significantly higher levels of honor norms compared to Turkish women, whereas no significant gender differences were found among German or British participants.

In contrast, some studies across countries such as Germany, Pakistan, and South Korea reported no significant gender differences in honor concerns (Anjum et al. 2019). Other research, however, found that women exhibited higher levels of concern for feminine honor, while masculine honor did not significantly

differ between genders (Guerra et al. 2013; Gunaratne and Abeysiriwardana 2023). These findings underline that feminine honor may be a more gender-differentiated construct, whereas masculine honor reflects broader societal expectations shared by both men and women (Ceylan-Batur and Sakallı 2019; Rodriguez Mosquera et al. 2002).

In honor cultures, violent behavior is often seen as a legitimate response to insults or actions perceived as damaging personal or family reputations (Nisbett 1993; Vandello and Cohen 2003). Within these cultural frameworks, violence by men against women may be rationalized as a means of preserving male honor (Cohen and Nisbett 1997; Vandello and Cohen 2003). In particular, recent research found that both masculine and feminine honor were positively associated with greater tolerance for IPV against women, while moral integrity showed a negative association (Gunaratne and Abeysiriwardana 2023).

Other studies have shown that social and cultural norms related to honor increase the likelihood of men perpetrating IPV against women. For example, a study comparing U.S. “honor states” and “non-honor states” found that the rates of rape and domestic homicide by White male perpetrators (age 15+) and self-reported experiences of rape and IPV by White female teenagers were significantly higher in honor states (Brown et al. 2018).

Because honor cultures emphasize adherence to traditional gender roles (Vandello and Cohen 2008; Rodriguez Mosquera 2016), they can be conceptualized as a cultural normative framework that fosters the reproduction of gendered expectations and sexist attitudes—both of which increase the risk of IPV victimization and its societal acceptance (Lopez-Zafra 2023).

1.3 | IPV Victimization and Ambivalent Sexism: Gender and Country Differences

Hostile and benevolent sexism influence normative beliefs and expectations regarding how men and women should behave in intimate relationships (Mızrak Şahin and Özerdoğan 2014). The significant and positive relationship among ambivalent sexism—as theorized by Glick and Fiske (1996)—attitudes supporting IPV against women, and IPV victimization is well documented (Agadullina et al. 2022; Çalıkoglu et al. 2018; Cinquegrana et al. 2022; Cuadrado-Gordillo and Martín-Mora-Parra 2022; Muñoz-Galiano et al. 2024; Tire and Yeşiltepe 2023). Women's IPV victimization is more prevalent in countries with higher levels of hostile and benevolent sexism (Zapata-Calvente et al. 2019).

However, research findings on the specific role of ambivalent sexism in IPV victimization are mixed. Some studies have identified only one component—either hostile or benevolent sexism—as a significant predictor. Some scholars found that only hostile sexism predicted violence perpetration and victimization among young adults (Cantor et al. 2021). In contrast, other researchers suggested that benevolent sexism had a more significant effect on women's IPV victimization than

hostile sexism (Vives-Cases et al. 2021). However, a substantial body of literature has highlighted that both hostile and benevolent sexism have a stronger effect on women's IPV victimization (Bareket and Fiske 2023; Cinquegrana et al. 2022; Cuadrado-Gordillo and Martín-Mora-Parra 2022; Tire and Yeşiltepe 2023).

Some studies, however, have highlighted the impact of both forms of sexism. Hostile sexism has been found to predict tolerant attitudes toward psychological, physical, and sexual abuse in intimate relationships, while benevolent sexism is linked specifically to tolerance of physical violence (Ünal et al. 2022). Although both forms increase the risk of IPV, they operate through different psychological mechanisms (Bareket and Fiske 2023). Hostile sexism is associated with overtly aggressive and destructive behaviors, whereas benevolent sexism promotes paternalistic control, subordination of women, and protective behaviors that ultimately reinforce inequality.

Ambivalent sexism influences psychological IPV victimization via mediating pathways, such as supportive attitudes toward IPV and endorsement of legitimizing myths (Cinquegrana et al. 2022). Specifically, hostile sexism emerged as a stronger predictor of the acceptance of psychological aggression through both mediators, while benevolent sexism contributed to the acceptance of IPV by reinforcing cultural narratives that normalize or justify violence in intimate relationships.

Cross-cultural research has shown considerable variations in the prevalence of hostile and benevolent sexism across countries (Arnosio et al. 2022; Tekkas et al. 2020; Zawisza et al. 2015). Sexist attitudes were found to be more widespread in Morocco compared to Spain (Arnosio et al. 2022) and more prevalent in Turkey than in South Korea (Tekkas et al. 2020). Across most countries, benevolent sexism tends to be viewed more favorably than hostile sexism (Fischer et al. 2017). Religious affiliation also plays a significant role in shaping sexist attitudes. Studies have shown that individuals with stronger religious identification—particularly within Islamic traditions—tend to endorse higher levels of both hostile and benevolent sexism compared to Christians or nonreligious individuals (Çetiner and Van Assche 2021; Mastari et al. 2022; Van Assche et al. 2019).

Gender differences in sexist attitudes also vary between genders. Several studies have shown that men generally endorse higher levels of both hostile and benevolent sexism compared to women (Cowie et al. 2019; Muñoz-Galiano et al. 2024; Navas et al. 2020; Rollero et al. 2021; Tire and Yeşiltepe 2023; Yurrebaso Macho et al. 2024). However, other studies have suggested that these differences are more evident in hostile sexism. Men tend to score higher in hostile sexism, whereas gender differences in benevolent sexism are often nonsignificant (Arnosio et al. 2022; Canto et al. 2014; Ferragut et al. 2017).

As reported above, the literature shows mixed findings and several unresolved conceptual issues.

A first divergence emerges between studies emphasizing gender symmetry in IPV victimization (Capinha et al. 2024; Chen and Chan 2021) and those suggesting gender asymmetry (Cunningham and Anderson 2023; Fanslow et al. 2023).

Contrasting findings have also emerged regarding the combined effects (Bareket and Fiske 2023) or the predominant role of benevolent (Vives-Cases et al. 2021) and hostile sexism (Cantor et al. 2021) on IPV victimization. Similarly, inconsistent findings have been reported regarding gender differences in sexist attitudes. Some studies have shown higher levels of both hostile and benevolent sexism among men (e.g., Muñoz-Galiano et al. 2024; Yurrebaso Macho et al. 2024), while others suggest that gender differences are mainly evident in hostile sexism (Arnosio et al. 2022; Ferragut et al. 2017).

These inconsistencies have been attributed to differences in sampling strategies, measurement approaches, and the dimensions of IPV under investigation. However, these divergent findings may also reflect the presence of cultural normative systems that can influence the meaning and perception of behaviors regarding gender violence across different contexts (De Coster and Heimer 2021).

Different conceptualizations of honor culture also emerge in the literature, with traditional perspectives framing it as a broad cultural category associated with Mediterranean and Middle Eastern societies (Vandello and Cohen 2003), and more recent approaches (Rodríguez Mosquera et al. 2002; Rodríguez Mosquera 2016) conceptualizing honor as a multidimensional construct (including family, social, masculine, and feminine honor concerns), whose salience may vary across sociocultural contexts and countries (Vignoles et al. 2024).

Finally, a significant theoretical tension exists within the IPV literature concerning the contrast between generalist and family violence perspectives, which conceptualize IPV as a form of interpersonal or family conflict characterized by gender non-specific risk factors (Hamel 2020), and feminist and socio-ecological perspectives, which instead interpret IPV as embedded in gendered structural disparities, power asymmetries, and culturally situated meanings of gender violence and cultural norms regarding gender and power (De Coster and Heimer 2021; Ogolsky et al. 2025).

2 | Overview of the Present Study

Consequently, examining IPV across different socio-cultural contexts may contribute to expanding knowledge regarding the research gaps and theoretical tensions highlighted above.

Although several studies have explored the associations between IPV victimization, honor culture, and sexist attitudes, few have adopted a cross-cultural perspective. Previous research (Cross et al. 2014; Fischer et al. 2017; Smith et al. 2021) compared Western and Eastern countries in terms of honor culture and sexist attitudes. However, to the best of our knowledge, no studies have examined the intersection of honor concerns (including masculine, feminine, family, and social honor), ambivalent sexism, and IPV victimization through a direct comparison between Southern European and Middle Eastern countries. A cross-cultural approach may offer valuable insights considering the mixed empirical findings and unresolved theoretical tensions regarding IPV victimization, honor-related concerns, and ambivalent sexism. Comparing

countries characterized by different sociocultural configurations could potentially clarify whether variations in IPV victimization coexist with differences in honor-related concerns and ambivalent sexist attitudes.

Specifically, comparing Italy and Turkey allows for a critical examination of how IPV dynamics operate at the intersection of shifting cultural paradigms. Italy and Turkey share certain similarities but differ significantly in sociocultural structure. Although both nations are rooted in Mediterranean honor codes, they represent distinct trajectories: Italy reflects a context where non-traditional gender roles increasingly challenge established patriarchal structures, whereas Turkey provides a lens into a society where traditional honor (*namus*) remains a primary regulator of social conduct, further reinforced by the influence of political Islam.

In particular, the study focuses on psychological and physical forms of IPV, which are the most widespread and often normalized manifestations of partner violence.

Both Italy and Turkey display persistent gender inequalities. According to the Global Gender Gap Report (2025), both rank relatively low in terms of gender parity: Italy ranks 85th out of 148 countries, while Turkey ranks 135th (World Economic Forum 2025).

In Italy, IPV remains a pressing social issue. On average, one woman seeks help from an antiviolence center every 2 days. Official statistics show that physical (65.2%) and psychological (51.2%) violence are the most frequently reported forms. In fact, nine out of 10 women reported experiencing psychological abuse, which often co-occurs with other types of violence (ISTAT 2024). In 2023, 81% of murdered women were victims of gender-based violence, mostly in domestic or intimate relationships. Specifically, 41% were killed by their partners, and 12.8% were killed by ex-partners. The rate of women killed by a partner or ex-partner is 0.21 per 100,000 women—10 times higher than the rate for men (0.02 per 100,000) (ISTAT 2024).

In Turkey, violence prevention and monitoring centers supported around 275,000 women in 2024, offering shelter, financial assistance, psychological support, and social services (Ministry of Family and Social Services 2024). Of the 394 women murdered in 2024, 42% were killed by their husbands, 12% by partners, 8% by ex-husbands, and 6% by former partners. Moreover, 26% of women and 15% of men who experienced stalking, sexual, physical, or IPV during their lifetimes reported that it began before the age of 18 (Aslan et al. 2020). Among university students in Turkey, psychological violence is the most frequently reported form of IPV (Öztürk and Gökkaya 2022). Data from Mor Çatı Women's Shelter Foundation (2024) show that 37.7% of women experienced psychological violence, 26.5% experienced physical violence, 14.9% faced economic violence, 9.2% went through sexual violence, 3.2% were stalked, and 3.1% experienced digital violence. Within the Turkish context, IPV has been associated with sociocultural norms grounded in patriarchal gender relations and the culturally embedded concept of honor (*namus*), which conflates women's moral integrity with familial reputation and positions it as a cornerstone of male social capital (Üstünel 2021).

2.1 | Aims and Hypothesis

This study aims to expand upon existing research by examining cultural and gender differences in intimate partner violence (IPV) victimization, honor concerns, and ambivalent sexism among university students in Italy and Turkey. Based on previous literature, we formulated the following hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. *Female students are expected to report higher levels of IPV victimization than male students.*

Hypothesis 2. *IPV victimization is expected to vary across national contexts, with differences observed between students from Italy and Turkey.*

Hypothesis 3. *Levels of masculine, feminine, family, and social honor concerns are expected to vary across national contexts, with differences observed between students from Italy and Turkey.*

Hypothesis 4. *Male students are expected to report higher levels of both benevolent and hostile sexism than female students.*

Hypothesis 5. *Levels of benevolent and hostile sexism are expected to vary across national contexts, with differences observed between students from Italy and Turkey.*

Given the mixed and inconclusive findings in prior research regarding gender differences across domains of honor (i.e., masculine, feminine, family, and social honor), no directional hypotheses are formulated for gender effects on these variables.

3 | Methods

3.1 | Procedure and Recruitment

The study was conducted in 2023 and involved undergraduate students enrolled at universities in Italy and Turkey. After receiving approval from the relevant Institutional Review Boards (protocol no. 0230734), the admissions offices of participating institutions provided a random selection of email addresses from the student body. A total of 2000 students (1000 from each country) were contacted via email.

The email invitation described the purpose of the study, estimated completion time (~15 min), and included a link to the online survey. Before accessing the survey, participants reviewed an informed consent form detailing the study's objectives, confidentiality assurances, and voluntary participation terms. Only those who provided consent proceeded to complete the questionnaire.

A total of 1249 students completed the survey, yielding a response rate of 62.5%. Of these, 696 participants (55.7%) identified as female and 553 (44.3%) as male. The participants' ages ranged from 18 to 25 years, with a mean age of 21.11 years ($SD = 1.86$).

The sample comprised 573 Italian students (45.9%) and 676 Turkish students (54.1%). Among the Italian participants, 322 were female; among the Turkish participants, 374 were female.

The average age was 21.20 years ($SD = 2.03$) for students in Italy and 21.01 years ($SD = 1.70$) for those in Turkey. All participants resided in their respective countries at the time of data collection.

The sampling was non-probabilistic and voluntary, and participants were not compensated.

3.2 | Measures

3.2.1 | The Revised Conflict Tactics Scale (CTS2S)

We employed the revised Conflict Tactics Scale short form (CTS2S; Straus and Douglas 2004) to assess intimate partner violence (IPV). This 20-item scale features five subscales designed to measure both the prevalence and frequency of various conflict tactics in relationships. Following previous methodological adaptations of the instrument in young adult and dating populations (e.g., Rodriguez et al. 2015), we adjusted the reporting period of the CTS2S from the past 12 months to the past 6 months to more accurately capture recent relationship dynamics and minimize recall biases. Participants were asked to report the frequency of each behavior in the past 6 months, on a scale from 0 (never) to 6 (more than 20 times), with an additional option (7) for behaviors that occurred before but not within the past 6 months. In this study, we focused exclusively on the Psychological Aggression and Physical Assault subscales. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the two subscales were as follows: Psychological Aggression was 0.83 for the Italian sample and 0.81 for the Turkish sample; Physical Assault was 0.97 for the Italian sample and 0.93 for the Turkish sample.

3.2.2 | The Honor Scale

To measure individuals' concern for honor, we employed the Honor Scale (Rodriguez Mosquera et al. 2002; Turkish version by Ceylan-Batur and Sakallı 2019). The Italian version of the Honor Scale was developed for the present study using the back-translation method (Brislin 1970). This 25-item scale consists of four subscales: (a) Concern for Family Honor (five items), (b) Concern for Social Honor (seven items), (c) Concern for Masculine Honor (six items), and (d) Concern for Feminine Honor (seven items). Participants were asked to rate how distressing they would find it if the behaviors or reputations described in each item were to occur, using a 7-point Likert scale, where 1 = not at all and 7 = very much. In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales were as follows: Concern for Family Honor was 0.77 for the Italian sample and 0.70 for the Turkish sample; Concern for Social Honor was 0.77 for the Italian sample and 0.82 for the Turkish sample; Concern for Masculine Honor was 0.72 for the Italian sample and 0.71 for the Turkish sample; and Concern for Feminine Honor was 0.78 for the Italian sample and 0.88 for the Turkish sample.

3.2.3 | The Short Version of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI)

To assess perceptions of sexism, we utilized the short version of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI) developed by Glick and

TABLE 1 | Means and standard deviations for scales scores by gender $\times$ culture groups ($N = 1249$).

	Male ($N = 553$)	Female ($N = 692$)			Italian ($N = 573$)	Turkish ($N = 672$)		
	M (SD)	M (SD)	F	η_p^2	M (SD)	M (SD)	F	η_p^2
CTS2S								
Psychological Aggression	6.36 (8.52)	6.15 (9.06)	0.34	0.00	5.03 (7.92)	7.27 (9.40)	17.66***	0.01
Physical Assault	2.83 (8.90)	2.76 (9.30)	0.13	0.00	1.67 (6.77)	3.74 (10.63)	13.59***	0.01
The Honor Scale								
Concern for Family Honor	20.03 (4.01)	20.41 (4.03)	3.93	0.00	20.53 (4.62)	20.00 (3.42)	3.39	0.00
Concern for Social Honor	36.53 (5.27)	36.55 (5.86)	0.16	0.00	37.54 (5.48)	35.69 (5.58)	29.35***	0.02
Concern for Masculine Honor	26.96 (6.43)	26.70 (6.13)	0.67	0.00	27.54 (6.77)	26.19 (5.73)	15.62***	0.02
Concern for Feminine Honor	27.03 (8.87)	27.90 (8.86)	5.15*	0.00	24.16 (7.83)	30.38 (8.71)	186.97***	0.13
ASI								
Benevolent Sexism	28.16 (11.45)	26.22 (12.00)	13.35***	0.01	19.29 (8.40)	33.79 (11.84)	717.08***	0.37
Hostile Sexism	31.64 (13.02)	28.63 (15.36)	22.76***	0.02	21.97 (11.18)	36.79 (13.36)	419.55***	0.25

* $p < 0.05$.*** $p < 0.001$.

Fiske (1996) (Italian version by Manganello Rattazzi et al. 2008; Turkish version by Sakalli-Ugurlu 2002). The ASI evaluates attitudes toward benevolent sexism—characterized by protective and affectionate views toward women in traditional roles—and hostile sexism—marked by antipathy toward women. The inventory includes 22 items, with 11 items for each type of sexism, rated on a 5-point scale from 0 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In this study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients for the subscales were as follows: benevolent sexism was 0.84 for the Italian sample and 0.82 for the Turkish sample; hostile sexism was 0.92 for the Italian sample and 0.91 for the Turkish sample.

3.3 | Data Analyses

Data analyses were performed using SPSS Statistics Version 21. The data were first screened for errors and outliers, and no missing values were detected. Descriptive statistics, including mean scores and standard deviations, were calculated for the variables. To investigate gender and cultural differences in intimate partner relationship conflicts, honor concerns, and sexism, a multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) was conducted. Interaction effects were accompanied by corresponding figures. Effect sizes are reported as partial eta squared (η_p^2), with 0.01 representing a small effect, 0.06 a medium effect, and 0.14 a large effect (Cohen 1988).

4 | Results

4.1 | Preliminary Analysis

First, the gender and age variables were compared. There was a not significant difference between Italian and Turkish students in terms of gender $X^2(1, N = 1249) = 0.758, p = 0.095$. In relation to the variable "age" there was no significant difference between the two countries, $t(1247) = 1939, p = 0.053$.

The mean scores and associated standard deviations for the assessed variables by gender and culture groups are presented in Table 1.

4.2 | Gender and Culture Differences in Intimate Partner Relationship Conflicts

A 2×2 MANOVA was performed, examining the effects of gender (females vs. males) and culture (Italian vs. Turkish) on the two CTS2S subscales (psychological aggression and physical assault). The analysis revealed no significant main effect of gender, $F(2, 1240) = 0.171, p = 0.843$, Wilks' $\lambda = 1.00, \eta_p^2 = 0.00$. However, there was a significant main effect of culture, with a medium effect size, $F(2, 1240) = 9.80, p < 0.001$, Wilks' $\lambda = 0.98, \eta_p^2 = 0.02$. Univariate analyses indicated that

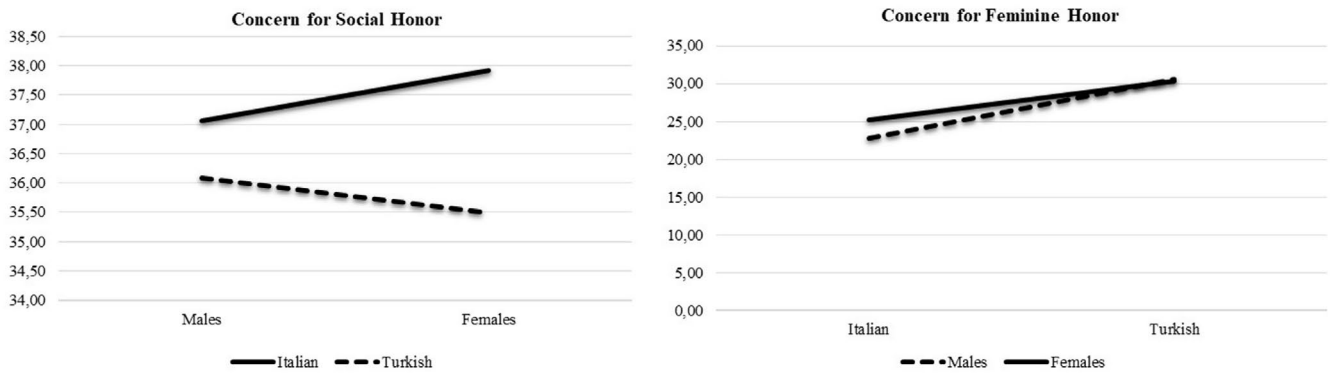


FIGURE 1 | Interaction of gender culture regarding Concern for Social Honor and Concern for Feminine Honor.

Turkish students reported significantly higher levels of psychological aggression and physical assault compared to Italian students (see Table 1). Lastly, no significant interaction effect between gender and culture was found, $F(2,1240)=2.41$, $p=0.09$, Wilks' $\lambda=0.99$, $\eta_p^2=0.00$.

4.3 | Gender and Culture Differences in Honor Concerns

A 2×2 MANOVA was conducted to explore the influence of gender (females vs. males) and culture (Italian vs. Turkish students) on the four subscales of the honor scale. The analysis revealed a significant gender effect with a medium effect size, $F(4,1234)=2.78$, $p<0.05$, Wilks' $\lambda=0.99$, $\eta_p^2=0.01$. Subsequent univariate tests indicated that female students, on average, scored significantly higher on Concern for Feminine Honor compared to male students (see Table 1).

Additionally, a significant cultural effect with a large effect size was found, $F(4,1234)=94.67$, $p<0.001$, Wilks' $\lambda=0.77$, $\eta_p^2=0.23$. Univariate analyzes showed that Italian students, on average, reported significantly higher levels of Concern for Social Honor and Concern for Masculine Honor, while Turkish students, on average, demonstrated significantly higher levels of Concern for Feminine Honor compared to their Italian counterparts.

Finally, a significant interaction gender $\times$ culture with a small effect size was obtained [$F(4,1234)=4.33$, $p<0.01$, Wilks' $\lambda=0.99$, $\eta_p^2=0.01$]. On the univariate level, the interaction was significant for Concern for Social Honor and Concern for Feminine Honor $F(1,1237)=5.52$, $p\leq 0.05$, $\eta_p^2=0.00$ and $F(1,1237)=8.55$, $p<0.01$, $\eta_p^2=0.01$, respectively.

Among males, cultural differences emerged in the levels of Concern for Social Honor and Concern for Feminine Honor. Italian males scored significantly higher in Concern for Social Honor compared to Turkish males, while Turkish males had significantly higher scores in Concern for Feminine Honor than their Italian counterparts.

Similarly, among females, Italian women scored significantly higher in Concern for Social Honor than Turkish women, whereas Turkish women showed significantly higher levels of Concern for Feminine Honor compared to Italian women. These results were confirmed from the t -test performed separately for

males and females according to culture. Refer to Figure 1 for the interaction plot.

4.4 | Gender and Culture Differences in Sexism

A 2×2 MANOVA was conducted to examine the effects of gender (females vs. males) and culture (Italian students vs. Turkish students) on the two subscales of the ASI. The analysis revealed a significant main effect of gender with a medium effect size, $F(2,1236)=13.12$, $p<0.001$, Wilks' $\lambda=0.98$, $\eta_p^2=0.02$. Univariate tests showed that, on average, males exhibited significantly higher levels of both benevolent sexism and hostile sexism compared to females (see Table 1).

Additionally, a significant main effect of culture with a large effect size was found, $F(2,1236)=413.09$, $p<0.001$, Wilks' $\lambda=0.60$, $\eta_p^2=0.40$. Univariate analyzes indicated that Turkish students, on average, reported significantly higher levels of both benevolent and hostile sexism compared to Italian students.

Moreover, a significant interaction between gender and culture was observed, with a medium effect size, $F(4,1234)=30.32$, $p<0.001$, Wilks' $\lambda=0.95$, $\eta_p^2=0.05$. This interaction was significant for both benevolent sexism and hostile sexism at the univariate level, $F(1,1237)=11.02$, $p<0.01$, $\eta_p^2=0.01$ and $F(1,1237)=50.55$, $p<0.001$, $\eta_p^2=0.05$, respectively. Among males, Turkish individuals scored significantly higher in both benevolent and hostile sexism compared to Italian males. Similarly, Turkish females also scored significantly higher in both forms of sexism compared to Italian females.

These results were confirmed through t -tests conducted separately for males and females based on culture. Refer to Figure 2 for the interaction plot.

5 | Discussion

This study aimed to investigate gender and cultural differences in intimate partner relationship conflicts, honor-related concerns, and sexism among university students from Italy and Turkey. Grounded in a socio-ecological framework, the present study conceptualizes IPV as a phenomenon emerging from interacting processes operating at multiple levels, including culturally embedded norms such as honor and the internalization

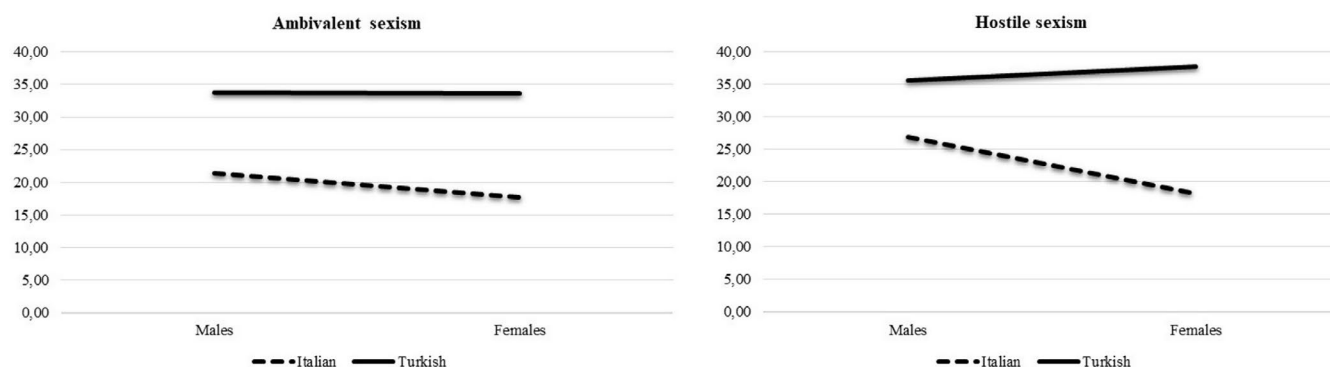


FIGURE 2 | Interaction of gender culture regarding benevolent and hostile sexism.

of these cultural scripts into individual-level attitudes, such as ambivalent sexism. The results revealed several gender- and culture-related differences, supporting and extending previous research findings. Most of the study's hypotheses were confirmed.

Our findings showed no significant gender differences in psychological aggression or physical assault across the entire sample. Contrary to Hypothesis 1, the results suggest that males and females experience similar levels of IPV victimization. This absence of significant gender differences may be attributed to two main factors. First, the temporal limitation of the assessment, which focused only on IPV experiences during the past year rather than over the lifespan, may have led to underreporting, particularly among women (Cunningham and Anderson 2023; Lysova et al. 2025). Second, the assessment did not consider crucial factors, such as the context, severity, or consequences of violent behaviors, which have been shown to be critical in understanding IPV dynamics (Zapata-Calvente et al. 2024).

Interestingly, although gender differences were not statistically significant, males reported slightly higher levels of both psychological and physical aggression than females. This may be explained by sociocultural influences, including honor-related norms and religious normative frameworks. In sociocultural contexts characterized by stronger endorsement of honor-related norms, as highlighted by Malayeri et al. (2024) in a study of Iranian participants, transgressions of traditional gender roles by women are often perceived as more offensive than violent behavior itself. As a result, women are frequently blamed for the violence, while male aggression may be viewed as a justified means of restoring family or personal honor (Baldry et al. 2013; Katzman et al. 2024).

Although this pattern was observed in an Iranian context, similar dynamics have been documented in other honor-oriented cultural settings, suggesting that these processes may extend to contexts such as Turkey (Gul and Schuster 2020). Further supporting this explanation, research has shown that men who strongly endorse honor norms are more likely to interpret interpersonal conflicts—particularly those that challenge traditional gender hierarchies, such as infidelity (Ceylan-Batur et al. 2021), romantic rejection, or threats to male authority (Malayeri et al. 2024)—as personal affronts to their social standing. Such perceived threats are frequently linked to aggressive responses involving the restoration of honor, avoidance of humiliation,

and reaffirmation of social respect (Ceylan-Batur et al. 2023). These findings may suggest the powerful influence of cultural honor norms on perceptions of violence and may help explain why gender differences in IPV are nuanced, context-dependent, and shaped by broader sociocultural dynamics. In this sense, similar levels of reported IPV victimization across genders may coexist with gendered sociocultural systems that shape the meaning, normalization, and regulation of violence within intimate relationships.

In line with Hypothesis 2, the Italian and Turkish students exhibited significant differences in their levels of psychological aggression and physical assault. Notably, Turkish students reported significantly higher levels of both psychological aggression and physical assault compared to their Italian counterparts. This finding aligns with previous research documenting cross-cultural variation in the prevalence and acceptance of IPV (Costa et al. 2015; Erdenebaatar et al. 2025; Rajkumar 2023; Zark and Satyen 2022). Within the socio-ecological framework, these cross-cultural differences may reflect variations in broader sociocultural systems in which gender inequality, honor-related norms, and contextual influences interact in shaping attitudes and perceptions of violence. Thus, one possible explanation for these differences is that individuals from different cultures may perceive violent behaviors against a partner differently, particularly with regard to psychological violence (Delgado Álvarez et al. 2015).

For example, research on honor-related violence in countries such as Germany (dignity culture), Pakistan (honor culture), and South Korea (face culture) has suggested that such behaviors have taken on a (dys)functional role within their respective societies (Anjum et al. 2019). Although the cultural models differ—honor in Pakistan, dignity in Germany, and face in South Korea—these examples collectively illustrate how culturally embedded perceptions of honor and social identity shape attitudes toward violence, which may also be relevant to Turkish and Italian contexts. The authors argue that personal or social perceptions of honor can lead individuals to feel entitled to restore their damaged honor, even if that involves perpetrating extreme acts of violence.

This perspective is further supported by cross-cultural research indicating that specific sociocultural factors are associated with the endorsement of honor-related norms and attitudes toward IPV. For example, Beller et al. (2021), who analyzed data from

26 countries, including Turkey, and found that the social dimensions of Muslim religion, such as mosque attendance and religious fundamentalism, significantly predict endorsement of honor-based violence. In a comparative study of Italian and Turkish participants, researchers found that Italians viewed honor-killing scenarios (e.g., cases involving alleged or confirmed adultery) as criminal acts, whereas a significant proportion of Turkish participants did not consider these acts criminal (Caffaro et al. 2016). These cross-cultural differences, especially in the interpretation of honor-killing scenarios, suggest that cultural frameworks—including honor-related cultural norms and religious fundamentalism—shape the normalization of violence.

Our findings regarding the higher rates of IPV victimization among Turkish students may reflect greater social tolerance for violence in the name of honor, in contrast to the Italian context. This underscores the role of structural factors, such as patriarchal social structures and cultural norms related to honor, in increasing the prevalence and visibility of IPV. Additionally, patriarchal social structures, which are more dominant in Turkey, reinforce male control and expect female obedience (Gul and Schuster 2020). Such a cultural framework may associate to higher societal tolerance for partner violence and facilitate the broader normalization of victimization. Therefore, effective responses to IPV require addressing both cultural and structural influences through the development of context-sensitive policies tailored to these sociocultural dynamics.

Regarding honor concerns, Turkish and Italian students differed significantly. Honor-related norms may function as culturally shared normative scripts that regulate gender roles and social expectations, particularly in relation to reputation, shame, and control over women's behaviors. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, Turkish students reported significantly higher levels of concern for feminine honor compared to their Italian peers. In contrast, Italian students exhibited significantly higher levels of concern for social honor and masculine honor. Previous studies (Caffaro et al. 2014; Cross et al. 2014) have explained that the concept of honor in Turkey is multifaceted. "Namus" refers specifically to sexual and feminine honor, closely tied to women's chastity and the family's reputation. Masculine and family honor are often seen as dependent on women's sexual purity (Khan 2018; Vandello and Cohen 2003).

In contrast, Italy's concept of honor has evolved to prioritize individualism and personal integrity over traditional communal values. As a result, in modern Italian society, honor is more often associated with personal reputation and moral conduct than with family-based standards of chastity. Furthermore, religious differences between Italy and Turkey may also reflect variations in these social dynamics. While the majority of Italians are Catholic, Islam predominates in Turkey. Catholic societies tend to hold more progressive views on divorce, premarital sexual relationships, and women's rights (Saharso et al. 2023). Conversely, in the Turkish context, certain dimensions of religious culture, particularly those shaped by Islamic traditions, play a significant role in maintaining honor concerns and conservative attitudes toward gender roles (Gengler et al. 2021). This may help explain why,

although concerns about honor persist in both countries, our study reveals distinct country-specific patterns in the prevalence of various honor codes. Feminine honor remains central in the Turkish context, shaped by collectivist and patriarchal norms, whereas Italian students place greater emphasis on social and masculine honor, reflecting a more individualistic interpretation.

Gender differences in honor concerns were observed. Specifically, females reported significantly higher levels of concern for feminine honor compared to males. This result is consistent with prior studies, which show that women are more likely to endorse feminine honor concerns than men, suggesting that in several cultural contexts, feminine honor remains a more gender-specific construct (Ceylan-Batur and Sakallı 2019; Guerra et al. 2013; Rodriguez Mosquera et al. 2002). Researchers suggest that women are more likely to internalize gendered expectations because they are generally regarded as responsible for family honor. Consequently, they experience stronger social pressures related to shame and sexual behavior (Foster and Bock 2024; Gunaratne and Abeysiriwardana 2023). Previous research (Rodríguez Mosquera 2011) has suggested that masculine and feminine honor reflect pan-cultural conceptions of masculinity and femininity. However, the ways in which these ideals are upheld or safeguarded likely vary across cultural contexts.

Our findings reveal distinct differences in honor concerns between Italian and Turkish males, as well as between Italian and Turkish females. Italian males exhibited significantly higher levels of concern for social honor compared to Turkish males. In contrast, Turkish males demonstrated a markedly greater concern for feminine honor than their Italian counterparts. Similarly, among females, Italian students reported significantly higher levels of concern for social honor than Turkish females, whereas Turkish females showed notably greater concern for feminine honor compared to their Italian peers.

According to previous studies (Uskul and Cross 2020; Uskul et al. 2023; Vignoles et al. 2024), a possible explanation for these findings is that honor concerns across countries and genders are shaped by different cultural logics. The Turkish sample reflects a cultural logic of honor, where social and family reputations must be defended and honor is strongly shaped by gender norms. In contrast, although Italy is typically regarded as a culture of honor, Italian men and women exhibit a cultural logic of dignity guided more by internal moral standards than by collective expectations (van Osch et al. 2020).

These findings lend support to the conceptualization of honor as a multidimensional construct (Rodríguez Mosquera 2016), suggesting that distinct honor domains may operate differently across sociocultural contexts. In particular, results suggest that different honor domains may be prioritized differently across genders and sociocultural contexts.

In Turkey, social norms regarding feminine honor persist among young adults. Recent findings (Çaylan Çağlayan and Topatan 2020) suggest that Turkish students, despite displaying egalitarian attitudes on general measures of honor, still endorse traditional views, particularly regarding premarital sex

and feminine honor. This highlights the persistent influence of gender-based cultural expectations. However, other scholars showed that although men and women conceptualize feminine honor similarly, they assign different levels of importance to its specific aspects because they do not share the same reputational concerns within honor cultures (Pomerantz and Sullivan 2024).

In this context, past research added that among Turkish university students, women's endorsement of honor norms is positively predicted by benevolent sexism, while men's endorsement is predicted by hostile sexism (Glick et al. 2016). Furthermore, religious frameworks rooted in Islamic traditions are associated with the endorsement of honor norms in both genders but more strongly among men. This suggests that honor concerns may be supported by different ideological and normative mechanisms in women and men, thereby reinforcing traditional gender roles and legitimizing women's subordination in honor cultures. Overall, this evidence highlights broader differences in cultural logics, socioreligious norms, and gendered systems of social control.

Finally, consistent with our findings on country differences in IPV victimization, recent studies have identified a positive correlation between feminine and family honor and tolerance of IPV, as well as an increased tendency to blame the victim (Alemi et al. 2025; Gunaratne and Abeysiriwardana 2023). In contrast, social honor has been found to be negatively associated with tolerance of IPV (Gunaratne and Abeysiriwardana 2023). These findings may help explain the higher levels of physical and psychological aggression observed among the Turkish sample compared to the Italian sample.

Consistent with Hypothesis 4, we found gender differences in sexism. Specifically, males displayed significantly higher levels of both benevolent and hostile sexism compared to females. These results align with previous studies (Glick and Fiske 1996; Sanz-Barbero et al. 2024; Yurrebaso Macho et al. 2024), demonstrating that men are more inclined than women to express both hostile and benevolent sexism. Similarly, a recent study found that men reported significantly higher levels of gender-specific system justification and both forms of sexism than women (Kaynak et al. 2023). This indicates that men are more likely to endorse attitudes that legitimize and maintain traditional gender roles, a pattern associated with significant implications for behaviors related to gender-based violence.

In this context, the extant literature showed that both hostile and benevolent sexism were positively correlated with men's self-reported violence against women (Gutierrez and Leaper 2025). Specifically, hostile sexism was linked to both the current perpetration of violence and the proclivity of engaging in such behaviors, whereas benevolent sexism was associated only with proclivity. Although benevolent sexism may appear subjectively positive, it subtly legitimizes gender inequalities by idealizing women as weak, dependent, and in need of protection—thereby reinforcing patriarchal gender hierarchies (Glick and Fiske 1996). Empirical work has shown that this idealization is associated with protective paternalistic attitudes, which, under the guise of care, can excuse control-oriented behaviors (Dardenne et al. 2007; Glick and Fiske 2001). Furthermore, a meta-analysis confirms that benevolent sexism is positively

associated with attitudes supportive of gender-based violence and men's proclivity to perpetrate such violence (Bareket and Fiske 2023). Thus, while hostile sexism is linked to overt aggression, benevolent sexism is often identified as a psychological correlate, where the emphasis on protection relates to the justification of paternalistic or controlling form of abuse.

Men's significantly higher scores in both hostile and benevolent sexism suggest contradictory feelings toward women, perceiving them as passive and less capable of active social roles (Türk et al. 2023). The authors further suggested that men's higher hostile sexism scores reflect a tendency to marginalize women, who are viewed as an opposing group. However, other studies have shown equal benevolent sexism scores between males and females (Arnosio et al. 2022; Ferragut et al. 2017), suggesting that both genders can equally endorse stereotypical beliefs portraying women as fragile and in need of male protection. This may be explained by the socially acceptable and seemingly positive framing of benevolent sexism, which obscures its discriminatory nature and leads both men and women to internalize such attitudes. Additionally, scholars found that benevolent sexism scores decrease with age, suggesting that participant age differences across studies may contribute to inconsistent findings (Nikrouy et al. 2025). Taken together, these results highlight the complex and context-dependent nature of sexist attitudes, influenced not only by gender but also by age, cultural norms, and the perceived social acceptability of different forms of sexism.

In line with Hypothesis 5, our findings reveal substantial differences between Italian and Turkish students. As expected, Turkish students reported significantly higher levels of both benevolent and hostile sexism compared to their Italian counterparts. These results are consistent with previous studies (Tekkas et al. 2020), which showed that Turkish and Korean nursing students exhibited higher levels of ambivalent sexism than Western samples, such as those from Sweden and the United States. This highlights significant cross-cultural differences in the internalization of traditional gender norms. Interestingly, Turkey and South Korea—both non-Western countries—showed similar ambivalent sexism scores, possibly due to shared cultural characteristics, such as collectivism and patriarchal gender norms.

A recent study demonstrated that participants from the United States and Spain exhibited notably low levels of ambivalent sexism, whereas the Turkish sample reported the highest levels (Plieger et al. 2024). Participants from Germany, Italy, and South Africa reported mid-range levels. The authors suggested that these findings may be explained by cultural characteristics; for instance, Turkish and South African participants reported higher levels of religiosity and political conservatism, both associated with greater ambivalent sexism and more conservative views on gender roles. Institutional efforts and gender-related policies also play a crucial role in adherence to sexist ideologies within countries. In this context, authors (Plieger et al. 2024) suggested that the lower ambivalent sexism levels observed among Spanish students compared to Colombian students may be partly attributed to Spain's comprehensive and autonomous approach to gender equality—such as mandatory workplace equality plans, gender-sensitive university curricula, and specialized courts for violence against women—which likely foster more egalitarian attitudes.

The high levels of both benevolent and hostile sexism observed among Turkish men and women can be better understood within the broader cultural and political context of Turkey. Research has indicated a strong relationship between religiosity and hostile sexism, particularly among men, suggesting that certain traditional interpretations of Islam are associated with gendered attitudes (Taşdemir and Sakallı-Uğurlu 2010). This framework may contribute to the normalization of traditional gender roles for women, often idealized through benevolent sexism and enforced through hostile sexism. These cultural and ideological patterns are reflected in political decisions, such as Turkey's 2021 withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention—a landmark treaty aimed at preventing gender-based violence. This withdrawal reflects a political stance that views gender equality as a threat to traditional family values and religious norms (Atila 2022). Overall, in line with the socio-ecological approach, the elevated levels of ambivalent sexism among Turkish students may reflect the confluence of enduring cultural norms and contemporary ideological resistance to progressive gender reform.

Our results also reveal significant sexism differences between Italian and Turkish individuals across both genders. Turkish males exhibited notably higher levels of both benevolent and hostile sexism compared to Italian males. Similarly, Turkish females showed significantly higher levels of both forms of sexism than Italian females. Recent studies in Turkey support these findings, revealing that Turkish men exhibit high levels of hostile and benevolent sexism, highlighting the ideological roots of these attitudes (Türkoğlu and Sakallı 2024). Additionally, individuals with a strong social dominance orientation reported significantly higher levels of ambivalent sexism, emphasizing its psychological foundations (Uşaklı 2024). Together, these findings point to a link between high levels of sexism in Turkish society and both individual ideologies and broader sociopolitical influences.

Traditional masculine roles in Turkey are deeply embedded in the social structure (Sancar 2009). Given the country's strong culture of honor (Glick et al. 2015), masculinity is closely tied to social respect (Uskul et al. 2012). This respect goes beyond personal integrity and is linked to fulfilling family responsibilities—such as providing for, protecting, and supervising women (Türkoğlu 2013). A consistent pattern emerges in Turkish men's perceptions of gender roles: the ideal man is seen as reliable, responsible, protective, authoritarian, independent, economically supportive, risk-taking, and occasionally aggressive (Sakallı Uğurlu et al. 2021). Within this framework, masculinity is constructed and legitimized through expectations of control and responsibility, particularly over women. Understanding masculinity in this cultural context may help explain how ambivalent sexist attitudes are formed, sustained, and potentially transformed. Some scholars emphasized that hegemonic masculinity and traditional gender roles perpetuate male dominance over women, thereby legitimizing sexist attitudes and normalizing violent behaviors (de Souza et al. 2024).

To provide a more comprehensive explanation of these variations between countries and genders, it is crucial to consider religiosity and perceived social pressure. Researchers have suggested that the endorsement of ambivalent sexism is associated

not only with religious affiliation (e.g., Muslim or Christian) but also with religiosity (the salience of religion in individuals' lives) and perceived social pressure for religious conformity (Mastari et al. 2022). Their study found that ambivalent sexism levels in women correlated with perceived pressure for religious conformity, whereas for men, ambivalent sexism was more directly related to religiosity. These findings suggest that socioreligious norms may operate through distinct mechanisms across genders. Moreover, in this perspective, the higher levels of ambivalent sexism observed among Turkish participants may be partly explained by the greater salience and normative influence of religious and traditional frameworks in the Turkish context.

Ünal (2024), adopting a system justification perspective, suggested that religious frameworks are associated with the maintenance of social hierarchies rather than being solely private convictions. Higher levels of adherence to these religious norms are linked to a greater motivation to uphold existing gender roles and power structures. Religion, in this regard, may operate as a regulatory framework—especially in maintaining traditional male–female roles—which is associated with the rationalization of both benevolent and hostile sexist attitudes. However, religiosity alone does not fully account for the endorsement of sexist attitudes; social pressure to conform to religious norms is also identified as a significant factor. Qualitative findings suggest that young women internalize expectations of being a “proper woman,” in connection with cultural and environmental influences rather than faith itself. Consequently, benevolent sexist beliefs may be expressed as a form of social compliance rather than personal convictions. In other words, support for sexist attitudes may relate less to personal conviction and more to group expectations and the desire to belong.

Taken together, these insights indicate that in collectivist societies such as Turkey, sexism must be understood as the result of an interplay between religious norms and environmental pressures, rather than solely individual belief systems. A nuanced explanation requires attention not only to religious identity but also to perceived conformity demands and cultural expectations surrounding gender roles. Overlooking this complexity risks overly reductionist interpretations of religion's role in shaping gender attitudes—an approach inconsistent with the evolving value landscape in contemporary Turkish society.

Moreover, as previously discussed, the Turkish cultural context is profoundly influenced by honor-based cultural norms. This framework may help explain the elevated levels of ambivalent sexism among the Turkish participants in our study. These patterns appear shaped not only by religious norms but also by honor-based concerns that continue to influence gender relations in Turkey. According to previous literature, honor beliefs are associated with benevolent sexist attitudes that idealize traditional femininity and emphasize women's purity and self-sacrifice (Aktan and Yalçındağ 2024). The authors highlight that this dynamic may result in women internalizing restrictive gender roles as a social norm, particularly where benevolent sexism is perceived as care or protection, as observed in Turkey. Deviations from these honor-based expectations are often associated with hostile sexist reactions, which may be linked to conformity through the threat of social rejection. This evidence aligns with our finding that Turkish women expressed

greater concern for feminine honor compared to Italian women. However, the available literature highlights that Italy remains a country where sexist attitudes are still strongly endorsed (Agueli et al. 2024; Cinquegrana et al. 2022; Sgarra et al. 2025). In conclusion, the differences observed between Italian and Turkish males, as well as between Italian and Turkish females, can be attributed to the social and cultural factors previously delineated. Additionally, the substantial discrepancy in scores between the Italian and Turkish participants could be partially attributed to social desirability bias within the Italian sample.

In conclusion, the present study contributes to the extant literature by providing preliminary insight into gender and country differences in IPV victimization, honor-related concerns, and ambivalent sexism. Grounded in the socio-ecological approach, the findings highlight that cultural honor-related norms and ambivalent sexist attitudes may represent significant correlates of IPV victimization across sociocultural and gender contexts. Furthermore, the study advances knowledge regarding ongoing debates concerning gender symmetry versus asymmetry in IPV victimization. Importantly, the results support contemporary perspectives conceptualizing honor as a multidimensional and context-sensitive construct, with distinct honor domains showing different patterns across sociocultural groups. Additionally, it contributes to the extant body of knowledge on gender differences in ambivalent sexist attitudes by highlighting the role of sociocultural and contextual factors in influencing these attitudes.

6 | Limitations and Future Directions

While the findings on gender and cultural differences are noteworthy, they should be interpreted with caution due to several limitations. The study focused exclusively on participants from Italian and Turkish universities, limiting the generalizability of the results. To gain a more comprehensive understanding, it is important to investigate these issues among students from other European universities. Moreover, university students constitute a specific socio-demographic subgroup, typically characterized by higher educational attainment, greater exposure to diverse perspectives, and increased openness to non-traditional values. At the same time, they are often engaged in an ongoing redefinition of gender role attitudes. In this sense, they may be viewed as occupying a transitional position between more traditional cultural norms and emerging egalitarian frameworks. This positioning may shape the endorsement of honor-related beliefs and sexist attitudes and consequently may influence the cross-cultural differences observed in the present study. Accordingly, the findings should be interpreted within the context of this particular developmental and socio-cultural profile, rather than being generalized to the broader population.

Another significant limitation is the cross-sectional design of the study. Future research should adopt longitudinal methods to better understand how students' intimate partner relationship conflicts, honor-related concerns, and sexism evolve over time.

All measures were based on self-reported data, which may be subject to social desirability bias. To improve the accuracy and

reliability of the findings, future research should explore alternative methods, such as interviews. Furthermore, the use of the CTS2S instrument restricted the measurement of IPV victimization experiences to the previous 12 months, preventing the assessment of lifetime experiences. This limitation impacts the generalizability of our findings.

A further limitation relates to the restricted analytical approach adopted in the present study. While the emphasis on group differences was consistent with the study objectives, the theoretical framework points to more intricate relationships among the variables that were not directly explored, including possible mediating and moderating mechanisms. For example, future studies could examine whether ambivalent sexism serves as a mediator between honor-related concerns and IPV victimization, and whether these associations differ across gender and cultural contexts.

However, the cross-sectional nature of the data limits the ability to establish temporal precedence or draw conclusions about causal directionality. Consequently, the examination of more complex models—such as mediation—requires careful interpretation in this context. Longitudinal designs would be particularly valuable, as they would allow for a more precise assessment of how these constructs evolve over time and provide stronger evidence regarding the pathways linking honor-related concerns, ambivalent sexism, and IPV victimization.

Additionally, future studies could expand on these results by including variables such as attitudes toward IPV and endorsement of myths that justify IPV across different cultural contexts. Research could also investigate emerging forms of victimization among young romantic couples, particularly those facilitated by digital technologies, such as cyberdating abuse. Finally, exploring individuals' thresholds for perceiving various types of violent behaviors—especially psychological abuse and extreme controlling behaviors—and examining the role of perceived religious and honor-related pressures would provide a more comprehensive understanding of gender and cultural differences in academic settings.

7 | Practical Implications

Although further longitudinal and cross-cultural research within other European university contexts is needed, our findings contribute valuable insights for developing prevention and intervention strategies in university settings. This study highlights the critical need to design psychoeducational programs sensitive to both cultural and gender differences. University services and practitioners should develop support systems and interventions that reflect the specific sociocultural backgrounds of their student populations.

This study offers new insights into the endorsement of honor culture, ambivalent sexism, and IPV victimization among male and female students from different geographical and cultural contexts. Considering the findings within the Turkish sample, intervention strategies should focus on deconstructing traditional gender ideologies, fostering critical reflection on honor-related beliefs, and promoting more egalitarian interpersonal

relationships. It is crucial that these interventions actively involve both male and female students, acknowledging that such beliefs may be internalized differently across genders.

Although Italian students reported comparatively lower levels of ambivalent sexism and IPV victimization, our findings still reveal the persistence of patriarchal ideologies among young Italian adults. This underscores the necessity of addressing more implicit and socially accepted forms of gender inequality and examining existing perceptions of masculinity and femininity. Prevention strategies should aim to raise students' awareness of how these norms influence their attitudes and behaviors within romantic and social contexts.

Where the results indicate similarities across gender or cultural groups, intervention strategies may adopt a more generalized approach. However, in areas with significant differences, cultural and gender-sensitive approaches are essential. In conclusion, our study emphasizes the importance of moving beyond universal approaches and adopting strategies informed by contextual factors. Such efforts are vital to preventing IPV victimization among young adults and promoting respectful, egalitarian relationships alongside inclusive and equitable academic environments.

Author Contributions

C.C., C.S. and V.V. contributed to the study conception and design. Material preparation, data collection performed by V.V., M.Ç. and I.E.K. Data analyzes performed by C.S. The first draft of the manuscript was written by all authors. All authors read and approved the final manuscript. All authors have read and followed the instructions for authors.

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Ethics Statement

All procedures performed in this study involving human participants were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki Declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. The Ethics Committee approval has been obtained from the University of Cagliari with a protocol number 0230734. Informed consent was obtained from all individual participants included in the study.

Consent

The participants have consented to the publication of this study.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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