



Spanish adaptation and psychometric properties of the Relationship Belief Inventory in community samples from Spain and Mexico

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Título: Adaptación al español y propiedades psicométricas del Inventario de Creencias sobre las Relaciones en muestras comunitarias de España y México.

Resumen: Identificar las creencias disfuncionales que tienen las personas sobre las relaciones de pareja es de gran importancia, ya que permite fomentar dinámicas de relación más saludables. Este estudio tuvo como objetivo traducir al español y verificar las propiedades psicométricas del Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI) en muestras comunitarias de España y México. Se realizó un estudio organizado en dos fases: la Fase I consistió en la traducción del inventario, mientras que la Fase II se centró en el análisis de las propiedades psicométricas. Los resultados mostraron que una escala de 18 ítems que evalúa solamente tres creencias (“El desacuerdo es destructivo”, “Se espera que se lea la mente” y “Los sexos son diferentes”) se ajustaba mejor que la propuesta original. La validez también fue apoyada por correlaciones con otras variables como el neuroticismo, el desequilibrio de poder en las relaciones y la relación entre los padres; así como por las diferencias entre la muestra clínica y la comunitaria, y entre hombres y mujeres. La consistencia interna se confirmó solo para las tres creencias incluidas en el modelo final. En conclusión, la validez y fiabilidad de la versión en español del Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI-S) fueron suficientemente respaldadas en este estudio.

Palabras clave: Creencias disfuncionales. Relación de pareja. Validez. Fiabilidad. España. México.

Abstract: Identifying dysfunctional beliefs about romantic relationships is important for fostering healthy relationship dynamics. This study aimed to translate into Spanish and verify the psychometric properties of the Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI) in community samples from Spain and Mexico. A two-phase study was conducted: Phase I involved translation, while Phase II focused on psychometric analysis. The results showed that an 18-item scale considering only three beliefs (“Disagreement is destructive”, “Mindreading is expected”, and “Sexes are different”) fit better than the original proposal. Validity was also supported by correlations with neuroticism, relationship power imbalance, and parents’ relationship; as well as by group differences between clinical and community samples, and between men and women. Internal consistency was confirmed only for the three beliefs included in the final model. In conclusion, the validity and reliability of the Spanish version of the Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI-S) were sufficiently supported in this study.

Key words: Dysfunctional relationship beliefs. Validity. Reliability. Spain. Mexico.

Introduction

Currently, the most common choice for adults worldwide is to live within a romantic relationship (Abela et al., 2020). Many studies have focused on trying to understand the functioning of these relationships, primarily in comprehending the origins and repercussions of marital distress (Bradbury & Fincham, 1990) because it ends up affecting both the couple and society. One of the factors that has received special attention is cognition (Epstein, 1982).

Some authors have studied the role of dysfunctional beliefs about romantic relationships. For Ellis (2003), one of the main causes of marital distress is the unrealistic expectations people have about both the roles of each partner and the relationship itself. According to Baucom and Epstein (1990), these beliefs appear to partly explain relationship dysfunction. For Gala and Ghadiyali (2020), conflicts in romantic relationships reflect irrational beliefs held by one or both partners.

The main issue arises when people perceive dysfunction-

al cognitions as healthy (Gala & Ghadiyali, 2020). Therefore, when some individuals evaluate their romantic relationship against unrealistic standards, it is common for them to feel dissatisfied (Epstein & Eidelson, 1981). Dysfunctional beliefs that impact emotions and behaviors are characterized by being extreme, rigid, and absolutist (Ellis, 1999; Ellis & MacLaren, 2004). These beliefs are often shaped by past experiences and affect the perception and interpretation of future experiences (Baucom & Epstein, 1990).

Research conducted in recent years has found that relationship beliefs are linked to the quality of the relationship (e.g., Ebrahimi & Mohamadlou, 2019; Tuzgöl Dost & Aras, 2021). Some research has focused on understanding the changes in romantic beliefs, finding that they are not static but decrease over time and during transitions (Sprecher & Metts, 1999), and differ between single individuals and those in relationships (Adamczyk & Metts, 2015). Concerning the family of origin, Zagefka et al. (2021) found that its dysfunction explained the presence of certain relationship beliefs, which ended up affecting their romantic relationship.

Differences between men and women have been found regarding the presence of certain beliefs (e.g., Bradbury & Fincham, 1993; Dickson, 1996; Haferkamp, 1999; Hamamci et al., 2010; Navid et al., 2018). It has also been found that

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(Article received: 30-01-2025; revised: 1-12-2025; accepted: 4-12-2025)

sex interacts with beliefs, so that some beliefs are associated with certain outcomes in men and with different outcomes in women (e.g., Emmelkamp et al., 1987; Hammond & Overall, 2013; Hunsley et al., 1996; Johnson, 2002).

All these findings have contributed to clinical practice. Many couple therapies aim to assist partners in identifying and verifying the truth of their cognitions (Epstein, 1982). For Fincham et al. (1990), attempting therapy without addressing cognition becomes almost impossible. Clinical samples tend to have higher scores in terms of irrational relationship beliefs than community samples (Dickson, 1996). Within therapy, individuals with more dysfunctional relationship beliefs tend to have low expectations, prefer individual intervention over couple therapy, and their goal leans more towards ending the relationship than improving it (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982; Epstein & Eidelson, 1981).

For all these reasons, it is crucial to have instruments that adequately assess beliefs about romantic relationships. These instruments must be both supported by validity evidence and culturally adapted for each population (Jeong & Lee, 2019). This way, they can be useful tools for researchers aiming to understand this phenomenon in depth, as well as for their use in clinical settings.

The Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI) and its cultural and linguistic adaptations

Various instruments have been developed to assess beliefs within romantic relationships. One of the most well-known and widely used in research is the Relationship Belief Inventory (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982), which was developed in the United States. This inventory evaluates five dysfunctional beliefs that may arise within a romantic relationship and generate distress.

The five beliefs it assesses are: “Disagreement is destructive”, which refers to the idea that any disagreement in a relationship signals a lack of love; “Mindreading is expected”, the notion that if partners truly love each other, they should be able to recognize each other’s needs and preferences without explicit communication; “Partners cannot change”, meaning that there is no way a partner’s attitudes can change; “Sexual perfectionism”, the idea that to be a good partner, one must also be a perfect sexual partner; and “Sexes are different”, which suggests that men and women are completely different, making mutual understanding difficult due to these dramatic differences.

In 1982, Eidelson and Epstein published their validity study. Regarding evidence of validity based on the relationship with other variables, most of the subscales correlated as expected with marital adjustment and with a measure of irrational beliefs about self. Additionally, in the clinical sample, most subscales were negatively correlated with therapy goals and expectations measures. Only two subscales showed significant differences between the community and clinical samples. Regarding reliability, internal consistency was exam-

ined using alpha coefficients, with values greater than .70 found for all subscales.

After the publication of the original instrument, two additional validity studies were conducted in the United States. The first was published in 1993 by Bradbury and Fincham, and the second by James et al. in 2002. In both cases, the original structure was not proved, and it had to be modified; regarding reliability, some of the subscales had internal consistency coefficients lower than .70.

In addition to these two validity studies, cultural and linguistic adaptations of the RBI have also been conducted. One was carried out in the Netherlands (Emmelkamp et al., 1987) and another in Turkey (Hamamci et al., 2010). As part of a master’s thesis, the internal consistency of the Portuguese version of the RBI was calculated (Gomes Albino, 2018). To our knowledge, only one validity study in Spanish has been conducted as part of a doctoral thesis (Pereiro Murias, 2006), but it has not been published and the thesis is not publicly accessible online. It is important to emphasize that in many of the adaptation studies, some items had to be removed as part of the process. Additionally, the internal consistency coefficient of some subscales was lower than .70. In studies that assessed whether the instrument could differentiate between clinical and community samples, this was not confirmed for all subscales.

Research using the RBI and the importance of its use in the Spanish-speaking population

Since its creation in 1982, many studies have used the RBI, either using all five subscales or selecting specific ones, as an assessment tool for relationship beliefs. The main findings of these studies include associations with relationship satisfaction (e.g., Sullivan & Schwebel, 1995; Zagefka & Bahul, 2021) and relationship quality (e.g., Goodwin & Gaines, 2004; Möller & Van Zyl, 1991).

Associations have also been found with different types of behaviors. For instance, with violent behaviors (e.g., Fincham et al., 2008; Wright & Roloff, 2015), as well as with negative behaviors such as hostility and rejection (e.g., Bradbury & Fincham, 1993; Fitzpatrick & Sollie, 1999).

The RBI has also been used to assess the relationship between dysfunctional beliefs and specific personal variables such as quality of life (Navid et al., 2018), attachment style (Kilman et al., 2013), or depression (Uebelacker & Whisman, 2005). Some research has focused on identifying whether exposure to external stimuli, such as literary genres (Stern et al., 2019) or certain types of television programs (Haferkamp, 1999; Vangeel et al., 2020), promotes the development of these types of beliefs.

Some research has also employed the RBI to assess evidence of validity of a new instrument (e.g., Baucom et al., 1996; Ghomian et al., 2021; Jordan & McCormick, 1988; Nichols et al., 2015), and to assess the functioning of marital education programs (e.g., Bent-Goodley, 2017; Lucier-Greer

et al., 2012) or certain types of therapy (e.g., Montag & Wilson, 1992).

Finally, although the RBI has been primarily used in North American populations (e.g., James et al., 2002; Kilmann et al., 2013; Nichols et al., 2015; Stern et al., 2019; Wright & Roloff, 2015), research has also been conducted on different continents such as Africa (e.g., Bent-Goodley, 2017; Möller & Van Zyl, 1991), Asia (e.g., Ghomian et al., 2021; Hamamci et al., 2010), Europe (e.g., Goodwin & Gaines, 2004; Vangeel et al., 2020; Zagefka & Bahul, 2021), and Oceania (e.g., Dickson, 1996; Hammond & Overall, 2013).

Despite its extensive use and scientific importance over the years, it is challenging to find research employing this scale in Spanish-speaking countries. Scarcely, two theses conducted in Spain have been identified (Pereiro Murias, 2006; Ramiro Sanchez, 2018). Therefore, the objective of this study was to translate the RBI into Spanish and to verify its psychometric properties, including its reliability and validity, in both a Spanish sample and a Mexican sample.

Hypotheses

We expected to confirm, in line with the authors of the RBI, the five-factor structure of the inventory.

We also expected to find that some RBI subscales would discriminate between men and women and between clinical and community samples. In particular, we expected that men would score higher on “Sexual perfectionism” (Dickson, 1996; Haferkamp, 1999; Hamamci et al., 2010; Stern et al., 2019), and that participants from the clinical sample would score higher on all subscales (Hamamci et al., 2010).

We also hypothesized that some of the RBI subscales would be positively associated with neuroticism (Ghumman & Shoaib, 2013; Samar et al., 2013) and with the perception of relationship power imbalance (Fincham et al., 2008; Wright & Roloff, 2015), while a negative association was expected with the parents’ relationship in the family of origin (Zagefka, 2022; Zagefka et al., 2021).

Finally, we expected the subscales to demonstrate adequate internal consistency.

Methods

Study design

A two-phase cross-sectional study was carried out. Phase I involved the translation process. Phase II consisted of administering the translated questionnaire to analyze its psychometric properties.

Measures

The Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI)

Developed by Eidelson and Epstein in 1982, it is a self-report questionnaire that aims to identify five unrealistic be-

liefs within romantic relationships: “Disagreement is destructive” (e.g., “If your partner expresses disagreement with your ideas, s/he probably doesn’t think highly of you”), “Mindreading is expected” (e.g., “I get very upset if my partner does not recognize how I am feeling and I have to tell him/her”), “Partners cannot change” (e.g., “My partner does not seem capable of behaving other than s/he does now”), “Sexual perfectionism” (e.g., “I get upset if I think I have not completely satisfied my partner sexually”), “Sexes are different” (e.g., “Men and women probably will never understand the opposite sex very well”). It consists of a 40-item questionnaire scored on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 0, “Strongly disagree”, to 4, “Strongly agree”. High scores on all subscales indicate the presence of dysfunctional beliefs. In the original study, the subscales had Cronbach’s alpha ranging from .72 to .81 (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982).

Initial questionnaire of the AMAR Project

Phase II was conducted within a larger longitudinal study named AMAR Project, which aims to identify the variables that influence marriage stability and satisfaction. The initial questionnaire of this project was used, which includes both specific scales and questions about sociodemographic data, personal characteristics, family-related characteristics, and information about romantic relationships. The constructs evaluated in this questionnaire and used in this research are as follows:

Neuroticism. It was assessed using the 12 items (e.g., “When I’m under a great deal of stress, sometimes I feel like I’m going to pieces”) corresponding to this trait found in The NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) in its Spanish-validated version (Costa et al., 2002). Responses had five alternatives ranging from 0, “Strongly disagree”, to 4, “Strongly agree”. The internal consistency index for this sample was .86.

Relationship Power Imbalance (RPI). The responses of participants’ partners to the following questions were considered: “Within the relationship with your partner, have you ever had any of the following feelings? (1) I have felt inhibited, without freedom. (2) I have felt afraid, with fear. (3) I have felt trapped in the relationship.” Responses had five alternatives ranging from 0, “Never”, to 4, “Very often”. Although RPI is not a direct measure of violence, it has been found to be a good proxy for intimate partner violence (IPV) (Martín-Lanas et al., 2021). In this sense, it is expected that if a participant has high scores on the RBI, their partner is more likely to report IPV. The internal consistency of these items was satisfactory ($\alpha = .80$).

Parents’ relationship in the family of origin. It was assessed through the following question: “How do you perceive the relationship between your parents?” The response had five alternatives ranging from 0, “Very dissatisfactory”, to 4, “Very satisfactory”.

Phase I: Translation of the original scale into Spanish

Authorization to translate the inventory was obtained from the editor of the original RBI.

Translation of the RBI

The translation was carried out by a panel of four experts following a process that adheres to the standard guidelines recommended for the intercultural adaptation of psychological questionnaires (Gudmundsson, 2009; International Test Commission, 2010; Muñoz et al., 2013). Translators took care not to use local expressions or linguistic turns specific to a particular region or country. Aware of the different meanings of nuances that some verbs, nouns, or adjectives may have in different Spanish-speaking countries, they made conscious effort to use expressions that are common and easily understood both in Spain and in Latin America.

The process included two forward translations (English into Spanish) by two independent bilingual translators, reconciliation of the forward translations, and back translation (Spanish into English) performed by a bilingual translator not involved in the previous steps and without knowledge of the original version. The back translation served as an instrument to find inaccuracies in the forward reconciled translation by independent ratings of both versions. At this stage, discrepancies between the three translators were discussed to produce a more refined version, which was later reviewed by an external native Spanish expert to ensure natural phrasing and verify spelling and grammar.

Pilot testing

A panel of five experts in the field of family therapy then reviewed and approved the final version, and a pilot study tested it on a sample of 10 volunteer couples (20 people). These 20 volunteers also completed a form asking whether they understood all the items, if they found anything irrelevant or offensive, and if they had any comments or suggestions for additional questions to include.

The respondents did not have any major medical condition that could constitute a significant mental impairment affecting their ability to complete the RBI and the pilot test. Inclusion criteria for all respondents included 1) being over 18 years of age, 2) living in a heterosexual stable relationship with their partners, and 3) signing an informed consent form before the beginning of any procedure. Comments and suggestions were reviewed and discussed, resulting in some minor changes to the final version.

Phase II: Psychometric evaluation

Sample and Recruitment

In this phase, two separate samples were considered: the community sample and the clinical sample.

Community sample. This sample was part of a larger longitudinal project titled AMAR Project. It consisted of 1267 participants: 622 were residents of Spain, and 645 were residents of Mexico. Ages ranged from 17 to 65 years (M : 29.23 years; SD : 5.13 years) and 56% of participants were female. Educational levels were as follows: 18.8% had education up to secondary (no formal education, primary, or secondary studies), 49.3% held an undergraduate degree, and 31.9% had postgraduate studies. Most participants identified as Catholic (87.2%), 8.4% did not believe in God or were unsure, 2.8% believed in God but had no religion, and 1.6% reported other religious affiliations. About one-third (32.1%) were cohabiting with their partner. Regarding parents' marital status, 83.5% were married, 2.5% had never married, 12.4% were separated or divorced (with or without remarriage), and 1.6% had other arrangements. At the time of the evaluation, the participants were in a romantic relationship and had decided to get married in the near future (within one year). Couples were recruited from premarital courses and wedding fairs. Both members of the couple could participate in the study. This is the main sample of this study, and it was used for all procedures to test validity and reliability. Floor and ceiling effects were examined for each item. Several items showed a notable floor effect (proportion of minimum responses exceeding 17%), whereas ceiling effects were minimal across all items.

Clinical sample. It included 54 individuals from Spain who had requested couples therapy at the Family Diagnostic and Therapy Unit of the Department of Psychiatry and Clinical Psychology at the Clínica Universidad de Navarra (Pamplona, Spain). Ages ranged from 31 to 63 years (M : 45.53 years; SD : 9.40 years) and 54% of participants were female. This sample was used to compare data from this clinical sample with the community sample to verify whether the instrument could differentiate between them.

Data analysis

General considerations

Statistical analyses were conducted using the R software (R Core Team, 2022). Missing data were handled using an analysis-specific complete case approach. For each analysis, participants were included whenever they had complete data for the variables involved. Statistical significance was set at $p < .05$. The dataset and the analysis syntax are available at <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17897701>

Validity

Construct validity was assessed using three procedures:

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). It was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with the Diagonally Weighted Least Squares (DWLS) estimator to determine the fit of the original 5-factor model in the Spanish-speaking sample. Goodness-of-fit indices, including Com-

parative Fit Index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI), Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), and Goodness of Fit Index (GFI), were calculated. The following cutoff criteria were applied: for very good fit, $CFI \geq .95$, $TLI \geq .95$, $RMSEA \leq .06$, and $SRMR \leq .08$ (Hu & Bentler, 1999); and for acceptable or good fit, $CFI \geq .90$, $TLI \geq .90$, $RMSEA \leq .08$ (Gana & Broc, 2018), and $GFI \geq .90$ (Sharma, 1996). Additionally, two factorial invariance analyses of the RBI were conducted: the first between the Spanish and Mexican samples, and the second between sexes. Configural, metric, and scalar invariance were progressively evaluated using multigroup confirmatory factor analysis (MG-CFA). Strict invariance was not tested because, given the nature of the variables and the estimator used (DWLS), the error variances could not be freely estimated (Kline, 2016; Millsap & Yun-Tein, 2004).

Group differences. In order to determine if the RBI subscales discriminated between men and women, as well as between the clinical and community samples, latent mean differences (ΔM) were estimated within the scalar invariance model of the MG-CFA to compare the groups at the latent level. The latent mean of the reference group (men or the community sample) was fixed to zero, and the mean of the comparison group was freely estimated. In addition, Student's *t*-tests were used to examine observed-score mean differences. Prior to these analyses, the assumption of homoscedasticity was verified and met for all comparisons. Effect sizes were calculated using Cohen's *d*. Both latent mean difference (ΔM) and Cohen's *d* were interpreted according to conventional guidelines (small = 0.20, medium = 0.50, large = 0.80; Cohen, 1988).

Relationship with other variables. It was measured using the Spearman correlation coefficient to examine the relationship between the RBI and neuroticism, relationship power imbalance (reported by the partner), and the parents' relationship in the family of origin. As none of these three criterion variables met the assumption of normality, we used Spearman's correlation. The Spearman correlation coefficient was interpreted according to conventional guidelines (small = .10, medium = .30, large = .50; Cohen, 1988).

Reliability

Reliability was examined in terms of internal consistency. Ordinal alpha coefficients, as well as McDonald's omega coefficients, were computed for each subscale, both for the entire community sample and separately for each country. In addition, the standard error of measurement (SEM) was estimated based on the omega total coefficient to evaluate score precision.

Ethical considerations

This research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Universidad de Navarra.

Results

The result of Phase I was the Spanish version of the Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI-S) (Supplementary Table 6, see Appendix 1).

The results corresponding to Phase II of the study are reported below.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

We conducted a CFA to evaluate in our sample the factor structure of the RBI proposed by Eidelson and Epstein (1982). Initially, the model of 5 factors with 8 items each was tested (Model 1). Even though all the reverse-scored items were aligned in the same direction as the other items, some factorial loadings from the "Sexes are different" subscale were negative. In this model, absolute loadings ranging from .14 to .74 were found. We decided to remove items with absolute loadings below .30. The theory was reviewed to see if those items reflected something fundamental to the factor, and whether their removal might result in the loss of an important characteristic of the construct. It was observed that their elimination would not cause any fundamental changes to the construct. However, it is worth mentioning that in the "Sexes are different" subscale, two of the three items that were removed were related to relationship needs, leaving only one item on this topic. From "Mindreading is expected", three items were removed (2, 7, 17); from "Sexual perfectionism", two items were removed (24, 29); and from "Sexes are different", three items were removed (5, 20, 25). Most of the removed items were reverse-worded.

This new model, consisting of 32 items organized into 5 factors, was tested (Model 2), and all factor loadings were positive. However, the fit indices of this model were not good: $CFI = .873$, $TLI = .861$, $RMSEA = .084$, $SRMR = .080$, and $GFI = .948$. Consistent with theory, to improve Model 2, some covariances between error terms of the same factor were freed based on the suggested modification indices. This resulted in Model 3, and the fit indices were: $CFI = .912$, $TLI = .900$, $RMSEA = .072$, $SRMR = .070$, and $GFI = .963$. These indices reflect a better fit of the model, but they are not ideal, and many of them are at the limit of being considered acceptable.

Based on previous research where entire subscales were removed, it was decided to analyze each subscale individually. Two procedures were performed. First, a one-factor model for each belief was tested. Clearly, two of the five subscales showed poor fit indices ("Partners cannot change": $CFI = .842$, $TLI = .778$, $RMSEA = .128$, $SRMR = .094$, and $GFI = .975$; and "Sexual perfectionism": $CFI = .869$, $TLI = .782$, $RMSEA = .130$, $SRMR = .080$, and $GFI = .983$). Second, the internal consistency of each factor was tested using the entire sample. Only three of the five subscales achieved ordinal alphas greater than .70, while the two with lower alphas were the same ones that showed poor fit indices ("Partners cannot change": .68; "Sexual perfectionism": .57).

Table 6 (Supplementary; see Appendix 1) shows the factor loadings of each item in the different models.

Additionally, to ensure that the results were not influenced by combining the two samples, we tested Model 3 and the unifactorial models of the two factors that had shown inadequate fit separately for Spain and Mexico. The overall pattern of results was consistent with the pooled analysis: neither Model 3 nor the individual factors achieved acceptable fit indices in either country.

Considering these results, we decided to test a new model (Model 4) that includes only the three subscales that demonstrated both acceptable fit indices and internal consistency. Fit indices of this new model were: CFI = .958, TLI = .951, RMSEA = .070, SRMR = .061, and GFI = .981. Most of these indices reflect a very good fit of the model, and the RMSEA is at an acceptable level. No modification indices were added to this model. This final model was used in the subsequent validity and reliability analyses.

Table 1
Goodness-of-fit indices for each model.

Model	$\chi^2(df)$	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR	GFI	Δ CFI	Δ RMSEA
Model 1: five-factor model with 40 items	7347 (730)	.791	.777	.093	.085	.919		
Model 2: five-factor model with 32 items ^a	3904 (454)	.873	.861	.084	.080	.948		
Model 3: Model 2, improved ^b	2828 (438)	.912	.900	.072	.070	.963		
One-factor models (32 items)								
Disagreement is destructive (8 items)	126 (20)	.980	.972	.069	.049	.993		
Mindreading is expected (5 items)	52 (5)	.981	.962	.091	.047	.995		
Partners cannot change (8 items)	380 (20)	.842	.778	.128	.094	.975		
Sexual perfectionism (6 items)	179 (9)	.869	.782	.130	.080	.983		
The sexes are different (5 items)	81 (5)	.971	.942	.116	.058	.992		
Model 4: three-factor model with 18 items ^c	847 (132)	.958	.951	.070	.061	.981		
Invariance across countries for Model 4 ^d								
Configural invariance model	922 (264)	.963	.957	.067	.064	.980		
Metric invariance model	1052 (279)	.956	.952	.071	.068	.977	-.007	.004
Scalar invariance model	1023 (314)	.960	.961	.064	.065	.977	.004	-.007
Invariance across sexes for Model 4 ^e								
Configural invariance model	955 (264)	.961	.955	.069	.065	.979		
Metric invariance model	1008 (279)	.959	.955	.069	.066	.978	-.002	.000
Scalar invariance model	1030 (315)	.960	.961	.064	.065	.977	.001	-.005

Note. CFI = comparative fit index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis index; RMSEA = root-mean-square error of approximation; SRMR = standardized root-mean-square residual; GFI = goodness-of-fit index; Δ = increment.

^a In Model 2, 32 items were considered organized into 5 factors (8 items were removed because their loadings were less than .30).

^b In Model 3, some error covariances between items of the same factor were added to Model 2 based on suggested modification indices.

^c In Model 4 only reliable factors were considered, resulting in a model of 18 items organized into 3 factors.

^d Invariance by country (Mexico and Spain).

^e Invariance by sex (men and women).

Invariance across countries

The equivalence of this final model for both countries was assessed through invariance analysis (see *Invariance across countries* in Table 1). First, the configural invariance analysis was conducted, evaluating the structure of the RBI in Spain and Mexico. Good fit indices were found indicating that the structure fits adequately with the data in both countries: CFI = .963, TLI = .957, RMSEA = .067, SRMR = .064, and GFI = .980. Next, metric invariance was tested, where factor loadings were equated and the resulting model was compared with the previous one. Fit indices suggested a good fit of the model. The Δ CFI value (-.007) and the Δ RMSEA value (.004) were within the acceptable criteria (Δ CFI \geq -.01; Δ RMSEA \leq .015) according to Cheung and Rensvold (2002).

Then, scalar invariance was assessed. In this model, both factor loadings and intercepts were equated, and a comparison was made with the metric invariance model. The fit indices suggested good fit of the data. In this case, Δ CFI = .004

and Δ RMSEA = -.007 were within the cutoff values. In summary, the structure, factor loadings, and intercepts variances were invariant between both countries.

Invariance across sexes

The same procedure was also conducted to test the equivalence of Model 4 for both sexes (See *Invariance across sexes* in Table 1). Configural, metric, and scalar invariance were assessed sequentially. In all cases, the indices showed a good model fit. For the metric compared to the configural model, Δ CFI = -.002 and Δ RMSEA = .000, both within the acceptable cutoff values. Similarly, for the scalar compared to the metric model, Δ CFI = .001 and Δ RMSEA = -.005, both within the acceptable cutoff ranges. These results confirm that the structure, factor loadings, and intercepts variances were invariant across men and women.

Group differences

Sexes

As shown in Table 2, significant sex differences emerged in all relationship belief subscales. Women scored higher than men on “Disagreement is destructive” ($\Delta M = 0.25, p < .001; d = 0.18, t(1168) = 2.98, p = .003$) and “Mindreading is expected” ($\Delta M = 0.32, p = .001; d = 0.23, t(1162) = 3.81, p < .001$), whereas men scored higher on “Sexes are different” ($\Delta M = -0.18, p = .011; d = -0.16, t(1165) = -2.70, p = .007$). Although these differences reached statistical significance, all effect sizes were small, indicating modest mean differences between groups.

Table 2

Sex differences in relationship beliefs: Latent and observed mean comparisons.

Relationship belief	Men ^a		Women ^a		Latent mean difference		Observed-score mean difference		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	ΔM	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	<i>t</i> (<i>df</i>)	<i>p</i>
Disagreement is destructive	1.02	0.56	1.12	0.59	0.25	<.001	0.18	2.98 (1168)	.003
Mindreading is expected	1.32	0.68	1.48	0.69	0.32	.001	0.23	3.81 (1162)	<.001
Sexes are different	1.71	0.76	1.58	0.77	-0.18	.011	-0.16	-2.70 (1165)	.007

Note. Observed means and standard deviations (*M, SD*) represent the average observed scores. Latent mean differences (ΔM) were estimated within the scalar invariance model of the MGCFA, fixing men's latent means to zero. Positive ΔM values indicate higher latent means for women. Similarly, positive values of Cohen's *d* indicate higher scores for women.

^a For this comparison, the entire community sample was considered.

Table 3

Score differences between community and clinical samples: Latent and observed mean comparisons.

Relationship belief	Community ^a		Clinical		Latent mean difference		Observed-score mean difference		
	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	ΔM	<i>p</i>	Cohen's <i>d</i>	<i>t</i> (<i>df</i>)	<i>p</i>
Disagreement is destructive	1.02	0.58	1.42	0.61	0.70	<.001	0.70	4.91 (591)	<.001
Mindreading is expected	1.44	0.68	1.87	0.70	0.82	<.001	0.63	4.42 (586)	<.001
Sexes are different	1.43	0.75	1.77	0.77	0.68	<.001	0.45	3.14 (589)	.002

Note. Observed means and standard deviations (*M, SD*) represent the average observed scores. Latent mean differences (ΔM) were estimated within the scalar invariance model of the MGCFA, fixing the community sample's latent means to zero. Positive ΔM values indicate higher latent means for the clinical sample. Similarly, positive values of Cohen's *d* indicate higher scores for the clinical sample.

^a For this comparison, only the Spanish community subsample was used.

Relationship with other variables

Table 4 shows the correlations of the RBI subscales with Neuroticism, RPI, and the parents' relationship. It was found that Neuroticism correlated positively and significantly with each of the subscales. A similar pattern was observed for re-

Clinical and community samples

Only the Spanish community sample was considered because the clinical sample was also collected in Spain. The results confirmed that the RBI successfully differentiated between the community and clinical groups. As shown in Table 3, the clinical sample scored significantly higher than the community sample on all relationship belief subscales, with medium to large effect sizes: “Disagreement is destructive” ($\Delta M = 0.70, p < .001; d = 0.70, t(591) = 4.91, p < .001$), “Mindreading is expected” ($\Delta M = 0.82, p < .001; d = 0.63, t(586) = 4.42, p < .001$), and “Sexes are different” ($\Delta M = 0.68, p < .001; d = 0.45, t(589) = 3.14, p = .002$).

lationship power imbalance. Finally, for the parents' relationship in the family of origin, it was found to be significantly and negatively related to the assessed beliefs, except for “Mindreading is expected”. In all cases, the correlation coefficients were small.

Table 4

Spearman correlation of RBI and other variables.

Relationship belief	Neuroticism ^a		Relationship power imbalance ^b		Parents' relationship ^c	
	<i>r</i> ^d	<i>p</i> ^e	<i>r</i> ^d	<i>p</i> ^e	<i>r</i> ^d	<i>p</i> ^e
Disagreement is destructive	.33	<.001	.16	<.001	-.07	.015
Mindreading is expected	.24	<.001	.11	.001	-.04	.149
Sexes are different	.16	<.001	.08	.024	-.09	.004

^a Score in the neuroticism subscale of the NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI).

^b Answers from participants' partners to the question: “Within the relationship with your partner, have you ever had any of the following feelings? (1) I have felt inhibited, without freedom. (2) I have felt afraid, with fear. (3) I have felt trapped in the relationship.”

^c Participants' responses to the question: How do you perceive the relationship between your parents?

^d Spearman's rho. ^e *p* value for Spearman's rho coefficient.

Internal consistency

It was found that the subscales “Disagreement is destructive”, “Mindreading is expected”, and “Sexes are different” showed adequate reliability, as reflected in their internal consistency coefficients. Both ordinal alpha and McDonald’s omega values ranged from .70 to .87 across samples. The

standard errors of measurement (SEM) ranged from .21 to .36, representing less than 10% of the total score range (0-4) and thus suggesting good precision of the obtained scores (Table 5).

Table 5
Ordinal Alphas (α), McDonald’s Omegas (ω) and Standard Errors of Measurement (SEM) for the Full, Spanish and Mexican Community Samples.

Relationship Belief	Full community sample			Spanish community sample			Mexican community sample		
	α	ω	SEM	α	ω	SEM	α	ω	SEM
Disagreement is destructive	.80	.84	.23	.83	.87	.21	.77	.82	.24
Mindreading is expected	.74	.79	.32	.74	.81	.29	.74	.77	.34
Sexes are different	.74	.79	.35	.74	.81	.33	.70	.76	.36

Note. α = ordinal alpha; ω = omega total coefficient; SEM = standard error of measurement, computed as $SD \times \sqrt{(1 - \omega)}$.

Discussion

This study aimed to adapt the RBI to Spanish (Phase I) and assess its psychometric properties (Phase II) in two Spanish-speaking community samples: one from Spain and one from Mexico. We didn’t confirm the original structure of the RBI. Many reductions were necessary in both the number of items and the number of subscales, resulting in a final 18-item scale organized into three beliefs: “Disagreement is destructive”, “Mindreading is expected”, and “Sexes are different”. Regarding the scale’s ability to differentiate between men and women and between clinical and community samples, the results confirmed the hypotheses. We also found that the subscales were positively associated with neuroticism and relationship power imbalance. For parents’ relationship in the family of origin, only “Disagreement is destructive” and “Sexes are different” were negatively associated. Finally, we found that the three subscales demonstrated adequate reliability, as indicated by their internal consistency coefficients and low standard errors of measurement, suggesting good precision of the scores across samples.

After conducting the CFA, several changes had to be made to the original structure. In a way, this was to be expected because none of the previous studies had got to maintain it. Initially, some items were eliminated; then, based on fit indices and internal consistency, only three subscales were considered in the final model. Among the eliminated items, some of them had also been removed in previous validity studies (James et al., 2002; Pereiro Murias, 2006). It is interesting to note that most of them were reverse-worded. A more in-depth study of these items could be conducted to understand their behavior and to determine if writing all the items in the same direction would benefit the construct evaluation.

Two subscales were removed: “Partners cannot change” and “Sexual perfectionism”. It is important to conduct an in-depth evaluation of these two beliefs because they have also shown reliability problems in previous research (Bradbury & Fincham, 1993; Emmelkamp et al., 1987; Hamamci et al., 2010; James et al., 2002; Pereiro Murias, 2006). A thorough study of both subscales is necessary, as the same pattern has been found across different cultures.

Considering the significant role that culture plays in individuals’ behaviors, perceptions, and thoughts (Jeong & Lee, 2019), it was decided to conduct an invariance analysis between the two countries: Spain and Mexico. Configural, metric, and scalar invariance were confirmed. According to Cheung and Rensvold (2002), this means that the latent means of the three beliefs measured by this Spanish version of the RBI are comparable between Spain and Mexico.

An invariance analysis between sexes was also conducted, showing that the measure was comparable for men and women. Based on this, the subscales could be validly compared across sexes. Taking this into consideration, we found that the subscales successfully differentiated between men and women. Women scored higher on two of the three beliefs. Regarding “Mindreading is expected”, it aligned with previous research (Hamamci et al., 2010; Navid et al., 2018; Pereiro Murias, 2006). Regarding the other two subscales, these findings become an important background to understand the difference of these beliefs in men and women. This is because, in some previous studies, no significant differences had been found (Dickson, 1996; Gomes Albino, 2018; Hamamci et al., 2010; Stern et al., 2019) and, in other studies where differences were found, there was no consensus on which gender scored higher (Bradbury & Fincham, 1993; Navid et al., 2018; Pereiro Murias, 2006). The fact that women scored significantly higher on these beliefs could be explained by different reasons, one of which may be related to neuroticism, as previous research has found that women tend to score higher in neuroticism than men (Kerry & Murray, 2021; Manson et al., 2023).

Therefore, it is not surprising that we found a significant relationship between neuroticism and these dysfunctional beliefs. Studies that associated neuroticism with the presence of irrational beliefs in general have been found in previous research (Ghumman & Shoaib, 2013; Samar et al., 2013), and there were also studies that linked dysfunctional relationship beliefs with irrational beliefs in general (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982; Emmelkamp et al., 1987; Hamamci et al., 2010). For these reasons, we decided to evaluate the relationship between RBI and neuroticism, and the results were as expected. Neuroticism is a personality trait that can make individuals prone to negative thoughts, interpretation biases, and

excessive worry. Thus, it is important to consider the evaluation of personality traits, especially neuroticism, when trying to understand relationship dynamics (Galovan et al., 2022).

As we have revised, understanding these dysfunctional beliefs is crucial for clinical practice. Although in early studies differences between clinical and community samples were assessed (e.g., Eidelson & Epstein, 1982; Emmelkamp et al., 1987), recent validity studies did not consider it. Our clinical sample consisted of couples seeking couple therapy, and they scored significantly higher than the community sample, with a moderate effect size. These results are better than those found in previous validations, where the RBI could not discriminate correctly between these two samples (Emmelkamp et al., 1987), or in which fewer subscales showed significant differences (Dickson, 1996; Hamamci et al., 2010).

Some studies had also shown that having violent attitudes was related to a higher presence of dysfunctional relationship beliefs, especially “Mindreading is expected” and “Disagreement is destructive” (Fincham et al., 2008; Wright & Roloff, 2015). The expected relationships were found in our study. The three dysfunctional beliefs we assessed share the common characteristic of not fostering people toward healthy communication dynamics. Previous research has found that poor communication patterns are related to both experiencing and perpetrating IPV (Sommer et al., 2019).

Finally, following Zagefka et al. (2021), who pointed out the importance of the role of the family of origin in the development of dysfunctional relationship beliefs, the relationship between the RBI and parents’ relationship was evaluated. The results were as expected for most of the beliefs evaluated, except for “Mindreading is expected”, suggesting that a good relationship between parents in the family of origin leads to fewer dysfunctional relationship beliefs.

Limitations and strengths

This study presents some limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. The first is related to the sample. It was a convenient sample invited to participate in the study and does not correspond to a random sample. The second is related to the structure of the inventory. Many items and entire factors had to be removed before we ar-

rived at the final model. Further studies of the items, factors, and the entire inventory are necessary. Third, while the final model was supported by associations of relationships with other variables and group differences, most of the size effects were moderate or small. Additionally, concerning the differences found between the clinical and community samples, results should be interpreted with caution because the clinical group was considerably smaller than the community group. Although measurement invariance was examined to allow latent mean comparisons, the unequal group sizes may have affected the stability of the estimates. Finally, several items exhibited notable floor effects, with a proportion of minimum responses exceeding 17%. Although internal consistency remained adequate, this may limit the sensitivity of the scale to detect some differences among participants.

Among the main strengths of the study, the following can be mentioned: First, the sample size, which in this case exceeds a thousand participants. Second, the inclusion of both Spain and a Latin American country (Mexico), which, to our knowledge, makes this study one of the first cross-cultural examinations of the RBI in these populations. Third, the RBI translation process, which followed all the necessary procedures.

Conclusions

Despite the limitations of this study, the obtained results suggest that three of the RBI subscales are valid and reliable for the Spanish and Mexican populations: “Disagreement is destructive”, “Mindreading is expected”, and “Sexes are different”. These three subscales generally perform well. This validity study becomes one of the first studies that make the RBI accessible to the Spanish-speaking population. Further studies are recommended in this population.

Complementary information

Conflict of interest.- The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Financial support.- No funding.

Data Research Availability Statement.- The dataset and the analysis syntax are available at <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.17897701>.

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Appendix 1

Table 6 (supplementary)

Spanish version of the Relationship Belief Inventory and factor loadings in the different models.

Original factors and items	Spanish version	Factor loadings ^a				
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	One-factor models	Model 4
Disagreement is destructive	El desacuerdo es destructivo					
If your partner expresses disagreement with your ideas, s/he probably doesn't think highly of you.	Si mi pareja no está de acuerdo con mi manera de pensar, probablemente no tiene un buen concepto de mí.	.507	.501	.469	.469	.466
I cannot accept it when my partner disagrees with me.	No puedo aceptar que mi pareja esté en desacuerdo conmigo.	.649	.650	.626	.651	.642
I take it as a personal insult when my partner disagrees with an important idea of mine	Cuando mi pareja no está de acuerdo con una idea mía importante, me lo tomo como un insulto personal.	.671	.674	.643	.699	.699
<i>I like it when my partner presents views different from mine.</i>	<i>Me gusta cuando mi pareja plantea puntos de vista diferentes a los míos.</i>	.364	.370	.368	.420	.343
I get very upset when my partner and I cannot see things the same way.	Me disgusta mucho cuando mi pareja y yo no vemos las cosas de la misma forma.	.674	.676	.646	.707	.713
I cannot tolerate it when my partner argues with me	No puedo tolerar que mi pareja discuta conmigo.	.618	.611	.615	.570	.606
When my partner and I disagree, I feel like our relationship is falling apart.	Cuando mi pareja y yo no estamos de acuerdo en algo, me siento como si nuestra relación se estuviera rompiendo.	.712	.703	.708	.682	.706
<i>I do not doubt my partner's feelings for me when we argue.</i>	<i>Cuando mi pareja y yo discutimos, no dudo de sus sentimientos hacia mí.</i>	.509	.495	.498	.435	.422
Mindreading is expected	Se espera lectura de la mente					
<i>I do not expect my partner to sense all my moods.</i>	<i>No espero que mi pareja se dé cuenta de todos mis estados de ánimo.</i>	.149				
<i>If I have to tell my partner that something is important to me, it does not mean s/he is insensitive to me.</i>	<i>Si le tengo que decir a mi pareja que algo es importante para mí, eso no significa que sea insensible a mis necesidades.</i>	.270				
I get very upset if my partner does not recognize how I am feeling and I have to tell him/her	Me disgusta mucho cuando mi pareja no se da cuenta de cómo me siento y se lo tengo que decir.	.614	.610	.639	.524	.651
People who have a close relationship can sense each other's needs as if they could read each other's minds.	Las personas que tienen una relación estrecha perciben las necesidades de la otra persona como si pudieran leer su mente.	.167				
It is important to me for my partner to anticipate my needs by sensing changes in my moods.	Para mí es importante que mi pareja note mis cambios de ánimo y se anticipe a mis necesidades.	.586	.594	.591	.629	.604
A partner should know what you are thinking or feeling without you having to tell.	Mi pareja debería saber lo que estoy pensando o lo que siento sin tener que decírselo.	.731	.724	.697	.795	.711
People who love each other know exactly what each other's thoughts are without a word even being said.	Las parejas que se quieren saben exactamente qué está pensando la otra persona sin necesidad de decir nada.	.439	.414	.372	.498	.410
If you have to ask your partner for something, it shows that s/he was not "tuned into" your needs.	Si tengo que pedir algo a mi pareja, eso refleja que no estaba "al tanto" de mis necesidades.	.703	.697	.733	.615	.655
Partners cannot change	La pareja no puede cambiar					
Damages done early in a relationship probably cannot be reversed.	El daño causado al principio de una relación probablemente sea irreversible.	.324	.335	.259	.313	
My partner does not seem capable	Mi pareja no parece capaz de actuar	.434	.448	.438	.345	

Original factors and items	Spanish version	Factor loadings ^a			
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	One-factor models Model 4
of behaving other than s/he does now.	de forma diferente a como actúa ahora.				
<i>A partner can learn to become more responsive to his/ her partner's needs.</i>	<i>Cada miembro de la pareja puede aprender a responder mejor ante las necesidades del otro.</i>	.465	.437	.364	.440
<i>Just because my partner has acted in ways that upset me does not mean that s/he will do so in the future.</i>	<i>Que mi pareja haya hecho cosas que me molestan no significa que vaya a hacer lo mismo en el futuro.</i>	.410	.409	.322	.462
A partner who hurts you badly once probably will hurt you again.	Si mi pareja me ha hecho mucho daño una vez probablemente volverá a hacerlo.	.533	.540	.472	.456
<i>If my partner wants to change, I believe that s/he can do it.</i>	<i>Si mi pareja quiere cambiar, estoy seguro/a de que puede hacerlo.</i>	.427	.407	.205	.579
<i>If you don't like the way a relationship is going, you can make it better.</i>	<i>Si no te gusta cómo va tu relación de pareja, puedes mejorarla.</i>	.560	.543	.428	.615
I do not expect my partner to be able to change.	No creo que mi pareja sea capaz de cambiar.	.679	.687	.624	.613
Sexual perfectionism	Perfeccionismo sexual				
I get upset if I think I have not completely satisfied my partner sexually.	Me quedaría disgustado/a si creyera que no he satisfecho completamente a mi pareja en el plano sexual.	.396	.411	.233	.643
<i>If I'm not in the mood for sex when my partner is, I don't get upset about it.</i>	<i>Si no tuviera ganas de tener relaciones sexuales cuando mi pareja sí, no me disgustaría por ello.</i>	.341	.311	.303	.196
A good sexual partner can get himself/herself aroused for sex whenever necessary.	Un/a buen/a compañero/a sexual es capaz de excitarse siempre que sea necesario.	.487	.489	.480	.241
If I cannot perform well sexually whenever my partner is in the mood, I would consider that I have the problem.	Si no pudiera tener una relación sexual satisfactoria cuando mi pareja lo desea, consideraría que tengo algún problema.	.574	.568	.518	.518
<i>I can feel OK about my lovemaking even if my partner does not achieve orgasm.</i>	<i>Me podría sentir bien en mis relaciones sexuales aunque mi pareja no llegara al orgasmo.</i>	.231			
<i>If my sexual partner does not get satisfied completely, it does not mean that I have failed.</i>	<i>El hecho de que mi pareja no quedara totalmente satisfecha en el plano sexual, no querría decir que fuera fallo mío.</i>	.295			
<i>Some difficulties in my sexual performance do not mean personal failure to me.</i>	<i>El que yo tuviera algunas dificultades en las relaciones sexuales no significaría que fuera un fracaso personal.</i>	.574	.516	.499	.350
When I do not appear to be performing well sexually, I get upset.	Si me pareciera que no lo estoy haciendo bien sexualmente, me quedaría disgustado/a.	.461	.481	.351	.689
The sexes are different	Los sexos son diferentes				
<i>Men and women have the same basic emotional needs.</i>	<i>Los hombres y las mujeres tienen las mismas necesidades emocionales básicas.</i>	.143			
Misunderstandings between partners generally are due to inborn differences in psychological makeups of men and women.	Los malentendidos en una pareja se deben generalmente a diferencias innatas en los rasgos psicológicos del hombre y la mujer.	-.488	.487	.445	.489
Men and women probably will never understand the opposite sex very well.	Probablemente los hombres y las mujeres nunca entenderán muy bien al sexo opuesto.	-.641	.648	.575	.687
<i>Men and women need the same basic things out of a relationship.</i>	<i>Los hombres y las mujeres necesitan las mismas cosas básicas de una relación.</i>	.167			
<i>Biological differences between men and</i>	<i>Las diferencias innatas entre hombres y</i>	-.237			

Original factors and items	Spanish version	Factor loadings ^a				
		Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	One-factor models	Model 4
<i>women are not major causes of couple's problems.</i>	<i>mujeres no son la principal causa de los problemas de pareja.</i>					
One of the major causes of marital problems is that men and women have different emotional needs.	Una de las principales causas de los problemas conyugales es que los hombres y las mujeres tienen diferentes necesidades emocionales.	-.426	.452	.398	.515	.497
You can't really understand someone of the opposite sex.	Es imposible entender a alguien del sexo opuesto.	-.692	.688	.711	.552	.648
Men and women will always be mysteries to each other.	Los hombres y las mujeres siempre serán un misterio los unos para los otros.	-.738	.753	.688	.793	.756

Note. ^a In all models, loadings represent the factor loading of each factor on its respective factor. Model 1: five-factor model with 40 items. Model 2: five-factor model with 32 items. Model 3: five-factor model with 32 items and some covariations freed. One-factors models: each model includes one single factor. Model 4: three-factor model with 18 items. Items in *italics* are reverse-scored.