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Portuguese attitudes towards legal and illegal governmental aggression

Thirty four years ago, Portuguese people experienced a political transition from a half-century lasting right-wing dictatorship to a democratic and human rights-based constitutional regime. Known as a “peaceful revolution”, this transition would have been built upon a consensus about the end of state violence against dissident citizens and of colonialism maintained by a military force. Being so, the present study aims to assess if low levels of tolerance towards governmental violence are currently part of lay Portuguese people’s attitudes. Portuguese participants (n=528) answered to PAIRTAS - Personal and Institutional Rights to Aggression Scale (Malley-Morrison et al., 2006). The responses to the “attitudes towards governmental aggression scale” included in this questionnaire are analysed (5 items, in a 7 point Likert scale). Internal reliability of this scale is relatively low ($\alpha=.59$). An exploratory factor analysis with varimax rotation shows the bi-dimensionality of the scale: two factors emerged (“attitudes towards illegal governmental aggression” and “attitudes towards legal governmental aggression”), explaining respectively 30,6 and 29,8 of the variance. In general, participants showed a low tolerance towards governmental aggression (Mode=1; M=2,27; SD=1,05). Women (N=292) showed significant less tolerance towards governmental aggression than men (N=235). Respondents who had already participated in demonstrations for peace, as well as the ones reporting a left-wing political orientation, scored significantly lower than other. Age, religion and social class didn’t produce significant effects in the evaluated attitudes.