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Article

Spanish Adaptation of the Support for Economic Inequality Scale (S-SEIS)

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ABSTRACT

Background: This study presents the adaptation and evidence of the validity of the Spanish version of the Support for Economic Inequality Scale (S-SEIS). This measure evaluates people's tendency to have positive attitudes toward economic inequality. **Method:** Two correlational studies were conducted, one exploratory ($N = 619$) and one confirmatory ($N = 562$). **Results:** S-SEIS showed good reliability in both studies. The factorial analysis showed a one-factor structure in Study 1 that was confirmed in Study 2. We also found a relationship between S-SEIS and other extensively used measures of attitudes toward inequality, such as intolerance toward inequality. S-SEIS positively correlates with belief in a just world, social dominance orientation (SDO), economic system justification (ESJ), institutional trust, and perceived democracy; it correlates negatively with intolerance toward inequality, perceived inequality, perceived warmth/competence of people in poverty and support for redistribution. **Conclusions:** The current research findings suggest that S-SEIS is a valuable instrument for evaluating the support of economic inequality in Spanish samples.

Adaptación Española de la Escala de Apoyo a la Desigualdad Económica (S-SEIS)

RESUMEN

Antecedentes: La versión Española de la Escala de Apoyo a la Desigualdad Económica (S-SEIS) evalúa la tendencia de las personas a tener actitudes positivas hacia la desigualdad económica. **Método:** Se realizaron dos estudios correlacionales, uno exploratorio ($N = 619$) y otro confirmatorio ($N = 562$). **Resultados:** S-SEIS mostró una buena fiabilidad en los dos estudios. El análisis factorial mostró una estructura unifactorial en el Estudio 1 que se confirmó en el Estudio 2. Igualmente encontramos una relación entre S-SEIS y otras medidas de actitudes hacia la desigualdad ampliamente utilizadas, como la intolerancia hacia la desigualdad. S-SEIS correlaciona positivamente con la creencia en un mundo justo, la orientación hacia la dominancia social (SDO), la justificación del sistema económico (ESJ), la confianza institucional y la democracia percibida; correlaciona negativamente con la intolerancia hacia la desigualdad, la desigualdad percibida, la sociabilidad/competencia percibida de las personas en situación de pobreza y el apoyo a la redistribución. **Conclusiones:** Los hallazgos sugieren que la S-SEIS es una medida válida para evaluar el apoyo a la desigualdad económica en muestras españolas.

Palabras clave:

Actitudes hacia la desigualdad
Desigualdad económica
Adaptación española
Apoyo a la desigualdad económica
Validez

Europe is now more unequal than it was four decades ago. Notably, inequality has been increasing in Spain in the last few years (Blanchet et al., 2019). The negative impact of such disparities has become a challenge for modern societies. The 2030 Agenda identified the reduction of inequality as one of the most critical fronts for sustainable development (United Nations, 2021). Thus, achieving a more egalitarian and equitable society will require a comprehensive agenda for reducing economic inequalities.

From this perspective, examining the attitudes that maintain existing inequalities is important (Benson et al., 2021; Roex et al., 2019) and seems to be a promising field aimed at lessening societal inequalities (García-Castro et al., 2020; Piff et al., 2020; Willis et al., 2022; Wiwad et al., 2019). In this paper, we aim to find validity evidence in Spanish samples for one of the most important scales developed for this purpose: the Support for Economic Inequality Scale (SEIS; Wiwad et al., 2019). We believe this could help expand our knowledge about attitudes toward economic inequality in Spain.

Past studies have shown that attitudes toward inequality could predict individuals' preferences for redistributive policies and other specific measures aimed at reducing disparities (García-Castro et al., 2020; García-Sánchez et al., 2018; Krijnen et al., 2021; Rodríguez-Bailón et al., 2017). However, these studies have operationalized attitudes toward inequality using a single-item measure adapted from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP; ISSP Research Group, 2012): "Income differences in [country] are too large" (p. 3). This measure has been extensively used in previous research and is usually called intolerance toward inequality (Bavetta et al., 2019; Castillo, 2011; García-Castro et al., 2022; Kiatpongsan & Norton, 2014).

However, using this single-item measure for assessing attitudes toward inequality may have some problems (e.g., inability to test reliability, low sensitivity, decreased effect size; Meyvis & Van Osselaer, 2018). As such, SEIS was developed to measure support for economic inequality, which encompasses individuals' beliefs about the perceived degree of economic inequality and their positive or negative evaluation of it (Wiwad et al., 2019). Said otherwise, SEIS tries to capture how individuals support or oppose the level of inequality they perceive. From this perspective, support for inequality and intolerance toward inequality—the construct usually measured using a single item—may represent opposing sides of the continuum of attitudes toward inequality (Wiwad et al., 2019). The main difference between support for and intolerance toward inequality is how they are measured in the literature.

The SEIS represents a recent and accurate measure to assess attitudes toward inequality. It has shown high reliability, convergent and discriminant evidence of validity (Wiwad et al., 2019). Importantly, this measure has been widely used and is positively related to the belief that life is a zero-sum game (Davidai & Ongis, 2019) and the belief in free will (Mercier et al., 2020); conversely, it is negatively related to perceived procedural justice (Tassinari & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2020) and situational attributions for poverty (Piff et al., 2020).

However, most of these studies have been conducted with samples from the United States. In our research, we aimed to analyze the psychometric properties and the factor structure of the Spanish version of the SEIS (S-SEIS), obtain evidence of its validity, and test its reliability in Spain. We also tested

relationships between the S-SEIS and other variables previously identified as correlates of support for economic inequality (Wiwad et al., 2019).

For instance, there is a negative correlation between supporting and perceiving economic inequality (Kuhn, 2019). In exploring the link between perceived inequality and support for inequality, we used three scales: a 3-item scale of perceived inequality (Sommet et al., 2019), a diagrammatic measure of the perception of economic inequality (ISSP Research Group, 2012), and the Perceived Economic Inequality in Everyday Life (PEIEL) scale (García-Castro et al., 2019), which was developed in the Spanish context. The two former instruments assess inequality in a more general and abstract way, the first using a Likert answer scale and the second using graphic options. However, the PEIEL scale more directly and meaningfully evaluates inequality by pointing out the individual's experiences of inequality in everyday life (García-Castro et al., 2019). Recent literature has shown that perceiving inequality in everyday life increases intolerance toward economic inequality, which, in turn, can increase the preference for redistribution (García-Castro et al., 2022). Likewise, higher SEIS ratings are negatively related to support for redistribution (Wiwad et al., 2019).

Attitudes toward inequality may also be related to how groups on the bottom of the economic ladder are perceived (Durante et al., 2013; Piff et al., 2020). Warmth (i.e., trustworthiness and friendliness) describes groups' stereotypic inclination for cooperation, whereas competence (i.e., capability and agency) describes their ability to act on their intentions (Fiske et al., 2002). People in poverty tend to be seen as incompetent (i.e., low in competence dimension; Durante et al., 2017), but there is less consensus in the social perception of their warmth (Connor et al., 2021; Durante et al., 2017).

Furthermore, other studies have found that people in poverty are perceived even more negatively when there are high levels of economic inequality (Sainz et al., 2020). In other words, in highly economically unequal contexts, people in poverty are seen as lower in competence and warmth (Wiwad et al., 2019). We aimed to explore how support for inequality relates to the social perception of people in poverty and expected that people who support inequality will perceive people in poverty in a more negative way across the two dimensions (i.e., competence and warmth).

Moreover, support for inequality has previously shown convergent validity evidence with other conceptually broad constructs (i.e., system-justifying ideologies; Wiwad et al., 2019), such as belief in a just world (Barreiro et al., 2018; Dalbert, 1999), social dominance orientation (SDO; Pratto et al., 2000; Silván-Ferrero & Bustillos, 2007), and economic system justification (ESJ; Jost & Thompson, 2000). Individuals who report higher levels of SDO tend to support unequal dominance-based relations between groups (Pratto et al., 2000) and report beliefs that support the economic system (Jost & Thompson, 2000; Silván-Ferrero & Bustillos, 2007). Along these lines, we expect that those individuals will also support inequality to a greater extent.

Individuals' tolerance toward inequality is also linked to concerns about economic inequality and attitudes toward the economy and the political system (e.g., institutions; Loveless, 2016). In the political arena, citizens from countries with higher income inequality tend to express more negative attitudes toward institutions (Goubin, 2018) and democracy (Krieckhaus

et al., 2014). Furthermore, people’s perceptions of inequality are negatively related to positive attitudes toward democratic institutions (Loveless, 2016).

Study 1

To analyze the psychometric properties and explore the factor structure of S-SEIS, we conducted an initial study that, for the first time, provided evidence of the scale’s convergent validity. Specifically, this study examined the relationship between two ways of measuring attitudes toward inequality: S-SEIS and the single-item scale broadly used in previous research (i.e., intolerance toward inequality; Bavetta et al., 2019; Castillo, 2011; García-Castro et al., 2019; Kiatpongsan & Norton, 2014). We expected that participants who demonstrated higher support for economic inequality also reported lower intolerance toward inequality (Hypothesis 1).

Furthermore, given the potential relationship between support for economic inequality and other related constructs, the first study explored the relationship that the support for inequality has with the tolerance of economic inequality, perceived economic inequality, PEIEL, ideal income gaps, and perceived warmth and competence of people at the bottom of the economic ladder. All of the measures included in the exploratory questionnaire, the data, the results and tables S1-S13 are available at Open Science Framework (OSF; https://osf.io/vp627/?view_only=96b513c9d2bc4f66afc949401b029136).

Method

Participants

We conducted an a priori sample size analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2009) for Pearson bivariate correlational test analysis. We estimated standard medium-low effect size ($d = .30$) to obtain an a priori power of 80% and a p-value of .05. The estimated sample size was 356, and we tried to get that minimum size after exclusions. We used as inclusion criteria participants’ Spanish nationality, living more than five years in Spain, and older than 18 (see preregistration at OSF). Given that we collected the data with the university mail service prevented us from knowing the amount of involvement of participants. Therefore, we planned to collect the responses of more participants than needed to get the minimum sample required after exclusions. The questionnaire was completed by 656 participants. The data from 37 people were excluded from the analysis because they were not Spanish nationals or had not residence in Spain for more than five years. A total of 619 participants (72.2% women, 26.8% men, 1.3% other indicated), ranging from 18 to 78 years old ($M = 24.83$, $SD = 8.44$), participated in this study.

Instruments

S-SEIS. The scale includes Spain as a reference in the five items (Table 1; adapted from Wiwad et al., 2019). We used a Likert scale for answers ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), $\alpha = .72$.

Intolerance Toward Inequality. We used an adapted version of the ISSP (ISSP Research Group, 2012) item, “Differences in income in Spain are too large.” We used a Likert-type answer scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

Table 1

Factor Analysis of the Spanish Version of the Support for Economic Inequality Scale (S-SEIS)

Final version of the S-SEIS	Factor loading	
	Study 1	Study 2
1. Se han exagerado mucho las consecuencias negativas de la desigualdad económica [The negative consequences of economic inequality have been largely exaggerated].	.52	.56
2. La desigualdad económica está causando muchos de los problemas de España [Economic inequality is causing many of Spain’s problems]. (R)	.77	.77
3. Estoy muy preocupado/a por el grado de desigualdad económica que existe actualmente en España [I am very concerned about the current level of economic inequality in Spain today]. (R)	.81	.79
4. La desigualdad económica no es un problema [Economic inequality is not a problem].	.62	.73
5. Tenemos que hacer todo lo posible para reducir la desigualdad económica que existe en España en la actualidad [We need to do everything possible to reduce economic inequality in Spain today]. (R)	.70	.79

Note: R = Reversed item.

Perceived Economic Inequality. We adapted the scale from Sommet et al. (2019). Participants indicated their level of agreement with three statements about inequality (e.g., “In Spain, there is a huge gap between rich and poor”), by using a 1 to 7 Likert scale (*not at all to completely*), $\alpha = .86$.

Ideal Income Gap. We used the measure adapted from Castillo (2011) and ISSP Research Group (2012). Participants answered the following questions using an open-response format: “What do you think a highly qualified person with a highly responsible position in the company should earn per month on average?” and “What about of a non-qualified person with a position of little responsibility in the company?”. This operationalization reflects the differences in ideal compensation for high- and low-status jobs. The index is calculated as the ideal earning for a high-status jobs divided by the ideal earning for a low-status jobs. Higher scores indicate higher ideal inequality levels.

PEIEL. We used the 12-item scale from García-Castro et al. (2019). The scale used a 7-point Likert response format ranging from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 7 (*completely agree*) for statements about personal encounters with inequality (e.g., “Among the people I know, some have bigger and more luxurious homes than others”), $\alpha = .90$.

Diagrammatic Measure of the Perception of Economic Inequality (ISSP Research Group, 2012). This measure consists of five graphs ordered by their different distributions of resources (1 = *more inequality* to 5 = *less inequality*). Among the five graphs, participants should choose the one that best represent the economic structure of current Spanish society.

Perceived Warmth and Competence of People in Poverty. We used nine traits to evaluate participants’ perception of low-SES people (adapted from Fiske et al., 2002). They were asked to what extent people in poverty were characterized by competence (e.g., competent, intelligent) and warmth (e.g., warm, honest). Participants answered using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*very much*). We used competence ($\alpha = .86$) and warmth ($\alpha = .92$) as independent dimensions.

Subjective Socioeconomic Status (SSS). Participants completed the MacArthur Scale of Subjective Socioeconomic

Status (Adler et al., 2000). They had to choose which rung of a 10-rung ladder best represented their positions in the social hierarchy ($M = 5.31$; $SD = 1.50$).

Political Ideology. Participants self-placed on a scale ranging from 1 (*extremely left-wing*) to 7 (*extremely right-wing*, $M = 3.98$; $SD = 1.74$).

Demographic Information. Finally, participants provided information about their age, gender, nationality, years living in Spain, native languages, level of education (from 1 = *none* to 9 = *Ph.D.*), degree (in case they were at the university level or higher), professional status, income (open response), and the number of family members.

Procedure

The study was approved by the Ethical Committee of the University of Granada (Reference: 969/CEIH/2019). To build a Spanish version of the SEIS, we translated, adapted, and aimed to find validity evidence for this instrument in Spain. Previously, four social psychology researchers translated the SEIS (Wiwad et al., 2019) into Spanish, from which they independently obtained four versions (Table S1). We qualitatively analyzed these translations, which were very similar and only presented small discrepancies. A preliminary version in Spanish was generated from this review. The Spanish version was independently translated into English by a professional translator who did not previously know the original scale. In addition, we compared the new version in English with the original version, evaluating each item's semantic and conceptual equivalence. Minimal changes were made to one of the five items to improve its representativeness and comprehensibility by using the criterion of maximum semantic fidelity to the original version of the scale (Hambleton, 2005). After that, we discussed the Spanish version of the items (Delgado-Rico et al., 2012) and reached a consensus about the final version.

Participants were contacted through the university mail service. They were invited to answer an anonymous questionnaire voluntarily, and provided informed consent before answering the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

First, Cronbach's alphas were calculated on each scale to confirm their reliability. Then, we carried out item analysis, especially the discrimination index (corrected item-total correlation). An exploratory factor analysis was conducted to examine the factor structure and to find evidence based on internal structure. Pearson bivariate correlations of all variables were computed.

Results

The items showed discrimination indices (indicated by the item's correlation to the corrected total) between .35 and .59, as well as a good ability to capture the participants' variation in the measured construct ($SD_{all\ items} > 1$, Table S2 in Supplementary Materials at https://osf.io/vp627/?view_only=96b513c9d2bc4f66afc949401b029136). The mean of the scale was close to the left side of the distribution ($M = 2.20$, $SD = 0.98$).

The result of the Bartlett sphericity test ($\chi^2 = 640.86$, $p < .001$) and the KMO index (.73) indicated the suitability of the correlation matrix for the exploratory factor analysis of the scale through the extraction of principal components. The exploratory factor analysis revealed a single factor with an eigenvalue higher than 1, which explains 47.75% of the variance. The saturation of the items in this factor ranged between .53 and .81.

The scale showed good internal consistency ($\alpha = .72$, $r = .72$) and evidence of convergent validity related to intolerance toward inequality (see Table 2). Then, a regression analysis was performed, and it was found to be statistically significant ($R^2 = .26$, $\Delta R^2 = .26$, $F(1, 617) = 218.25$, $p < .001$). SEIS significantly predicted intolerance toward inequality ($\beta = -.63$, $p < .001$, $d = .35$). See Table S3 in Supplementary Materials at https://osf.io/vp627/?view_only=96b513c9d2bc4f66afc949401b029136 for regression analysis with all of Study 1's variables. We computed the Variance Inflation Factors for each predictor and the Klein test for multicollinearity (Table S4).

Table 2

Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Bivariate Correlations between the Variables Measured in Study 1 and S-SEIS

Variable	M	SD	S-SEIS	
			<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
S-SEIS	2.20	0.98		
Intolerance Toward Inequality	5.72	1.21	-.511**	<.001
Perceived Income Inequality	6	1.06	-.483**	<.001
Ideal Income Gaps	815.76	20129.11	.025	.539
PEIEL	5.71	1.07	-.314**	<.001
Inequality Diagram	2.54	1.06	.257**	<.001
Warmth	3.81	0.75	-.350**	<.001
Competence	3.67	0.83	-.389**	<.001

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

S-SEIS ratings were negatively related to perceived income inequality, PEIEL, and perceived warmth and competence of people in poverty. S-SEIS ratings were positively associated with the values assigned to the diagrammatic measure of the perception of economic inequality. However, S-SEIS was not related to the ideal income gap.

Discussion of Study 1

This study provided evidence of the one-factor structure of the S-SEIS scale. Likewise, it showed that it presents adequate reliability. We found evidence of the scale's convergent validity, as it is negatively related to another way of measuring attitudes toward inequality through a single-item scale (i.e., intolerance toward inequality). Different exploratory analyses also found that the scale's value was (a) negatively associated with perceived income inequality, PEIEL, and perceived warmth and competence of people in poverty and (b) positively related to perceived inequality using a diagrammatic measure. The relationship between S-SEIS and the diagrammatic measure goes opposite to that between S-SEIS and the other measures of perceived inequality because the diagrammatic scale range went from high to low inequality. People who report support for inequality tend to perceive low levels of inequality in their country and

everyday life and tolerate the perceived disparity. This finding is particularly relevant because support for and intolerance toward inequality may represent the opposing sides of the continuum of attitudes toward this disparity (Wiwad et al., 2019). That is how the negative correlation between S-SEIS and intolerance toward inequality is explained. Moreover, participants who support economic inequality tend to perceive people in poverty as lower in warmth and competence.

In contrast, ideal income gaps were not shown to be related to support for inequality, which may not be surprising, given the limitations of the use of the pay ratios measure (Castillo et al., 2022). Particularly problematic are the anchoring effect caused by the assessment of current inequality and the bias effect that prevents its interpretation as a measure of desired levels of equality (Pedersen & Mutz, 2019).

In sum, the S-SEIS showed good validity evidence and sound reliability indices showing relationships with constructs relevant to the study of the causes and consequences of SEIS ratings.

Study 2

We conducted a second study to confirm the S-SEIS's one-factor structure and provide further convergent evidence. Specifically, this study examined whether the participants who reported higher support for economic inequality also perceived people in poverty as less: (a) warm (Hypothesis 2) and (b) competent (Hypothesis 3).

Furthermore, we aimed to explore the relationships between support for inequality and certain ideological measures, such as belief in a just world, SDO, and ESJ. We also included for exploratory purposes other measures related to redistribution preferences, institutional trust and perceived level of democracy.

Method

Participants

The initial sample was composed of 595 participants. The data from 33 people were excluded from the analysis because they were not Spanish nationals. A total of 562 people (72.1% women, 26.7% men, 1.2% indicated other) ranging between 18 and 66 years old ($M = 24.86$, $SD = 8.90$) participated in Study 2.

Instruments

As in Study 1, we included the S-SEIS ($\alpha = .78$, $r = .69$) and the same measures of perceived warmth ($\alpha = .91$) and competence ($\alpha = .81$) of people in poverty, SSS ($M = 5.47$, $SD = 1.48$), political ideology ($M = 4.09$, $SD = 1.77$), and the demographic information previously used. In addition to these, we included the following measures:

Beliefs in a Just World. We used a 6-item scale (Barreiro et al., 2018; adapted from the original scale of Dalbert, 1999). The answer scale has a 5-point Likert format ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) in response to statements like "I am confident that justice always prevails over injustice", $\alpha = .79$.

SDO. We used a 16-item scale (Silván-Ferrero & Bustillos, 2007; adapted from the original scale by Pratto et al., 1994). The scale has a 7-point Likert response format ranging from 1

(*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*, e.g. "The value of some groups of people is greater than that of others", $\alpha = .86$).

ESJ. We used a 7-item scale (Jaume et al., 2012; adapted from Jost & Thompson, 2000). The scale has a 7-point Likert response format ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*, e.g. "The gap between social classes reflects differences in the natural order of things," $\alpha = .83$).

Support for Redistribution. We used a 4-item scale (Wiwad et al., 2019; adapted from WVS, 2014). The scale has a 4-point Likert response format ranging from 1 (*nothing at all*) to 4 (a lot, e.g. "To what extent do you think government policies and programs are able to reduce poverty in this country?," $\alpha = .81$).

Institutional Trust. We adapted five items from the European Social Survey (2018). The scale has a 7-point Likert response format ranging from 1 (*strongly distrust*) to 7 (*strongly trust*) that participants were asked to use in response to questions like "To what extent do you trust the following institutions from Spain? President and their counselors, Parliament, political parties, legal system and the Police," $\alpha = .71$.

Perceived Democracy. We adapted 10 items from the WVS (2014) and the Democracy Index 2018 (The Economist Intelligence Unit, 2018). The response format ranged from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*, e.g. "The electoral process in Spain is just, fair, and transparent", $\alpha = .73$).

Procedure

Same as in Study 1.

Data Analysis

Same as in Study 1. Given that the theoretical definition of the construct implies a one-dimensional scale structure and that the exploratory factor analysis in Study 1 revealed a single factor, we conducted a confirmatory factor analysis using a robust maximum likelihood estimator, and we determined the model's fit by jointly evaluating the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR), Comparative Fit Index (CFI) and Tucker Lewis Index (TLI; Kaplan, 2009). Besides, we ran linear regression analyses, including the S-SEIS as the predictor variable and perceived warmth (a) and competence of people in poverty (b) as criterion.

Results

As in Study 1, the items showed good discrimination indices that ranged between .38 and .62, as well as a good ability to capture the participants' variation in the construct measured ($SD_{all\ items} > 1$).

The confirmatory factor analysis indicated an acceptable one-dimensional model ($SRMR = .044$, $CFI = .950$, $TLI = .901$). The single factor of the scale also showed good reliability. We found good construct reliability (Jöreskog Rho = .782) and composite reliability ($CR = .779$; Ab Hamid et al., 2017; Hair et al., 2014), and an average variance extracted of .415, which showed acceptable evidence of convergent validity (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). We performing multigroup analyses, we found configural invariance between Spanish and USA samples (Wiwad et al., 2019; see Table S12 and Table S13).

S-SEIS was negatively related to the perceived warmth and competence of people in poverty (see Table 3). Therefore, the negative relationship between support for economic inequality and the perception of low-SES individuals as warm and competent were replicated in this second study (Hypothesis 2-3). The findings revealed that S-SEIS significantly predicted low perceived warmth ($R^2 = .11$, $\Delta R^2 = .11$, $F(1, 560) = 69.26$, $p < .001$, $f^2 = .12$) and competence ($R^2 = .09$, $\Delta R^2 = .09$, $F(1, 560) = 57.47$, $p < .001$, $f^2 = .10$) of people with low socioeconomic resources. That is, S-SEIS predicted perceived warmth ($\beta = -.33$, $p < .001$) and competence of people with low-SES ($\beta = -.31$, $p < .001$). See Table S7 for regression analysis with all the variables included in Study 2. We did not detect multicollinearity issues with any predictor (see Table S8).

Table 3
Descriptive Statistics and Pearson Bivariate Correlations between the Variables Measured in Study 2 and S-SEIS

Variable	M	SD	S-SEIS	
			<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
S-SEIS	2.19	1.00		
Warmth	3.64	0.76	-.332**	<.001
Competence	3.61	0.76	-.305**	<.001
Beliefs in a Just World	2.54	0.74	.283**	<.001
SDO	2.25	0.86	.593**	<.001
ESJ	2.68	0.81	.498**	<.001
Support for Redistribution	3.58	0.53	-.479**	<.001
Institutional Trust	3.17	1.06	.129**	.002
Perceived Democracy	4.27	0.90	.217**	<.001

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

S-SEIS was positively related to belief in a just world, SDO, ESJ, institutional trust, and perceived democracy. Additionally, S-SEIS was negatively associated with support for redistribution.

Discussion of Study 2

In line with the results of the original SEIS (Wiwad et al., 2019), this second study confirmed the S-SEIS one-factor structure. It showed a good fit in the confirmatory factor analysis undertaken.

This study replicated Study 1, finding that the S-SEIS value was negatively related to the perceived warmth and competence of people of low SES (Wiwad et al., 2019). These results are congruent with the predictions of Piff et al. (2020) on the relationship between support for economic inequality and negative attributions to people in poverty, probably as a mechanism to justify inequality levels. The relations between variables that emerged in this study suggest that when people in poverty are judged after activating economic inequality they are evaluated more negatively (and not ambivalently) because in participants' minds people in poverty have completely failed. This finding aligns with Connor et al. (2021) and Tanjitiyanond et al. (2022), who agreed that people in poverty are negatively stereotyped in general. They are not only seen as incompetent and unassertive but also immoral, cold, and less than human in unequal contexts (see Sainz et al., 2020). Crucially, people tend to support redistribution to a lesser extent due to the perceived incompetence of people in poverty (Tanjitiyanond et al., 2022). In our studies, that would be especially true of those who support inequality.

Validity evidence of S-SEIS was provided by the positive correlation between S-SEIS and beliefs in a just world, SDO, and ESJ, as well as by the negative correlation between S-SEIS and support for redistribution. We found a moderate correlation between support for inequality, SDO, and ESJ. This makes sense given that orientation toward dominance and the justification of the economic system implies, to a certain extent, the acceptance of existing inequalities between groups (Jylhä, 2016; Pratto et al., 2000) even though these represent different theoretical constructs (Jost & Thompson, 2000). In this sense, support for inequality is related to ideologies that support the existing social order and the prevailing economic structure of society (Krijnen et al., 2021; Silván-Ferrero & Bustillos, 2007). At the same time, a negative and medium-sized correlational index links support for inequality to support for redistribution, which is in line with previous literature (Wiwad et al., 2019). If people attribute existing inequality to external factors, they may be more sensitive to these disparities and more prone to address them. In contrast, when people accept economic differences between groups, they have no interest in reducing these inequalities.

Furthermore, participants with higher scores on the S-SEIS showed higher institutional trust and higher perceived democracy in Spain. This builds on literature showing that individuals' tolerance toward inequality is not limited to economic concerns but linked to attitudes toward democracy's institutions (Loveless, 2016). As suggested by Loveless (2016), when inequality is perceived, people could share criticism of the economic and political systems, expected to be fair and egalitarian. Similarly, perceptions of fairness influence public support for the performance of the political system and approval of the current government (Linde et al., 2012). According to Benson et al. (2021), people who perceive inequality as a consequence of the sociopolitical context are more likely to recognize inequalities and could share criticism of the economic and political systems.

Conversely, legitimizing ideologies help coordinate beliefs, actions, and institutional practices that maintain hierarchy (Phelan & Rudman, 2011; Vargas-Salfate et al., 2018). Our results indicate that a part of society that supports inequality might not be sensitive to the existence of an institutional and political climate that contributes to maintaining inequality. People who support inequality to a greater extent and hold beliefs that justify the economic system would be less critical of institutions and the democratic system (Anderson & Singer, 2008; Tan et al., 2016).

Discussion

The studies presented show validity evidences, and reliability of the S-SEIS. Through two studies, evidence of the one-factor structure of the scale was found, similar to the structure of the original scale (Wiwad et al., 2019). We also provided empirical test in favor of the relationship between S-SEIS and other extensively used measures of attitudes toward inequality (i.e., intolerance toward inequality; ISSP Research Group, 2012), as well other relevant constructs such as perception of inequality. Likewise, S-SEIS predicted negative stereotypes of people in poverty.

Additionally, we found evidences of convergent validity concerning ideological constructs such as belief in a just world, SDO, ESJ, and support for redistribution, as shown by the original English version of the scale. Moreover, we found that

S-SEIS is not very strongly associated with these ideological variables ($r < .60$). Therefore, the relevant role of S-SEIS in the study of attitudes toward inequality is confirmed, along with the scale's capacity to capture individual differences in the way people accept disparities.

The extent to which inequality and its causes are perceived is relevant to understanding social and economic dynamics within current societies. If individuals perceive inequalities as unfair, their faith in their political and economic systems may decrease (Benson et al., 2021). This is especially true when this perception of fairness partly results from how inequality is thought to arise. Following this reasoning, we could expect that individuals who perceive inequality as a systematic problem created by society's impaired functioning will tend to oppose these differences. In this sense, we found that people who support inequality tend to perceive low levels of inequality in their country and their everyday life and highly tolerate the inequality they do perceive (García-Castro et al., 2022).

Previous literature has shown how important it is to perceive inequality to infer other normative features of societies (Moreno-Bella et al., 2019). In the same direction, supporting inequality affects how individuals perceive people of low SES. In the current research, we found that support for inequality is negatively related to the perceived warmth and competence of people in poverty, which is in line with previous studies (Durante et al., 2013; Wiwad et al., 2019). Considering that stereotypes contribute to the maintenance of inequality (Durante & Fiske, 2017; Fiske & Durante, 2019), further research could explore whether that negative social image represents a route by which individuals justify inequality.

In sum, given the inequality levels in Spain (Blanchet et al., 2019) and the associated negative consequences for society (Willis et al., 2022), the study of attitudes toward inequality and how they are related to the intention to reduce those disparities is a promising field (Benson et al., 2021; García-Castro et al., 2020). However, previous literature is mainly based on non-Spanish samples (Mercier et al., 2020; Sommet et al., 2019; Tassinari & Jasinskaja-Lahti, 2020). In this paper, we aimed to find validity evidence in Spanish samples for one of the most relevant scales for measuring attitudes toward economic inequality. SEIS (Wiwad et al., 2019) overcome the problems of using single-item measures for assessing attitudes toward inequality (e.g., ISSP Research Group, 2012), such as the inability to test reliability and low sensitivity (Meyvis & Van Osselaer, 2018). While adapting S-SEIS to a Spanish population, we used a proper adjudication of the altered scale without assuming the items would function as they did in the original studies when the content changed (Wiwad et al., 2019).

In both studies, we found satisfactory reliability indicators (Hair et al., 2014). As a limitation, the indicator of internal consistency in Study 1 was not as high as that of the original English version of SEIS. Fortunately, it increased in Study 2. We also found evidences of the S-SEIS scale's internal structure and convergent validity, which respectively support the factorial structure of the scale and the relationship between test scores and related constructs.

An essential value of adapting the SEIS scale to Spanish samples is that it opens new avenues of research on factors related to support of inequality in the Spanish context.

Some other constructs have previously been connected to attitudes toward inequality. For instance, tolerance toward

inequality increases when belief in meritocracy is stronger, and higher income levels are related to higher inequality tolerance (Roex et al., 2019). Further studies could explore the links between these variables using the S-SEIS.

There is no other psychometrically adjudicated measure of support for economic inequality with evidence of validity in Spain. Using this measure in future studies will contribute to measuring economic inequality more efficiently and effectively. Having a valid and reliable measurement instrument that enables researchers to ascertain the degree to which people are concerned with the disparity in their society may allow new avenues of research to be pursued. These avenues can explain how economic inequality creates dysfunctional societies and maintains the social structure in which it exists; new research may also develop to address these issues.

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