Influence of gender stereotypes on the attributions of gravity, responsibility and sanction
Julien Alexandre, Nathalie Lionet Przygodzki, Sabine de Bosscher

To cite this version:
Julien Alexandre, Nathalie Lionet Przygodzki, Sabine de Bosscher. Influence of gender stereotypes on the attributions of gravity, responsibility and sanction. 15ème Journée Scientifique des Jeunes Chercheurs en Psychologie, Nov 2020, Villeneuve d'Ascq, France. hal-03820834

HAL Id: hal-03820834
https://hal.univ-lille.fr/hal-03820834
Submitted on 1 Dec 2022

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L’archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire HAL, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d’enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.
INTRODUCTION

If male accused are more subject to be convicted and to receive longer sentences than women (Mazzella & Feingold, 1994), it is more difficult for male victims to be taken into consideration by the authorities (Whatley & Riggio, 1993). According to the INSEE (2017), women represent 10% of those convicted but receive half the imprisonment. Their presence in a court appears to be abnormal because they do not correspond to the typical offender profile (Wilczynski, 1997). Women have always been seen, in the collective unconscious, as more victims than responsible (Parent, 2012).

Ambivalent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996), namely benevolent or hostile, would reinforce the Belief of Just World (Lerner, 1980). Lonsowy and Fitzgerald (1995) have suggested that hostile sexist people are more likely to blame the rape victim and legitimize violence. Expósito and Herrera (2009) attributes benevolent sexism to a greater seriousness, considering the victim as fragile and to be protected (Chapleau, Oswald & Russel, 2008).

OBJECTIVES

What could be the influence of the hypothetical sexism of juries on their attributions of severity, responsibility and sanction?

- We postulated that:
  - Benevolent sexist attitudes would predict greater perceived gravity and heavier sanctions towards the perpetrator, especially when he is (H1).
  - Hostile sexist attitudes would predict greater responsibility to victims, especially feminine (H2).

METHOD

- Participants:
  - 160 women and 160 men (M_age = 35.43; SD_age = 15.92)
- Design:
  - Between-subjects design with participants’ ambivalent sexism * participant’s gender * perpetrator’s gender * victim’s gender * context (marital or professional)
- Material:
  - Aggression scenario (perpetrator’s gender * victim’s gender * context)

RESULTS

- Perception of the act severity
  - Aggressions are perceived to be more serious by women [F(1, 304) = 8.0390 ; p < .05].
  - More seriousness is attributed to the facts by participants who have a low level benevolent sexism [F(1, 304) = 16.86 ; p < .05] or a high hostile sexism [F(1, 304) = 4.0994 ; p < .05].

- Attribution of responsibility to the perpetrator
  - More responsibility is attributed to the aggressor by those who have a low level of benevolent sexism [F(1, 304) = 20.350 ; p < .05] or a low hostile sexism [F(1, 304) = 10.434 ; p < .05].
  - The responsibility of the female abuser is lower when the respondent is a woman with a high level of hostile sexism and when the victim is also a woman (figure 1).

- Attribution of responsibility to the victim
  - A male victim is considered more responsible [F(1, 304) = 14.136 ; p < .05].
  - Participants with a high hostile sexism blame the victim more [F(1, 304) = 7.0666 ; p < .05].
  - Female victims are judged more responsible by respondents with a high level of benevolent sexism when the perpetrator is a female (figure 2).
  - Male victims are considered more responsible by respondents with low levels of benevolent sexism who had to judge an assault committed by a woman (figure 2).

- Attribution of sanction to the abuser
  - The less benevolent the participants are, [F(1, 304) = 8,838 ; p < .05] or when the aggressor is a man [F(1, 304) = 18,615 ; p < .05] or when the context is public [F(1, 304) = 5,8686 ; p < .05], the more punishment they have given to the abuser.
  - Nevertheless, a high level of benevolent sexism is a predictor of greater punishment attributed to a male perpetrator [F(1, 304) = 24,5046 ; p < .05].
  - Respondents with high benevolent sexism are more severe, in the case of a female victim, towards male perpetrators rather than female [F(1, 34) = 11,15 ; p < .05].

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Contrary to our expectations (H1), the benevolent sexist participants show more leniency towards the aggressor (Soto-Quevedo, 2012) and blame the male victims. Conversely, the more they are hostile sexist, the more severe they are with the perpetrator and disempower the victim, except when the latter is a man (Viki & Abrams, 2002) which validates H2.

We cautiously concluded that sexism predicts victimization of women and penalization of men, but more researches are needed.

Indeed, the ASI measures sexism against women when half of the perpetrators and victims were men. In addition, the ASI items embody a vision that has not necessarily taken into account the gradual, albeit slow, evolution of mentalities. Some proposals are no longer socially acceptable as they once were.

We identified other limitations such as the inadequacy of the ten-centimetre scale or the need to interview a panel of justice professionals who would participate in the maintenance of sexist speeches and behaviours (Léonard & Soubrain, 2011).

> Our study could serve as a basis and argument for raising the awareness of citizen jurors before the opening of the trial as well as continuing formation for legal professionals.