



Covering sexual harassment: The effects of gender of journalists on audiences' perceived severity of sexual harassment

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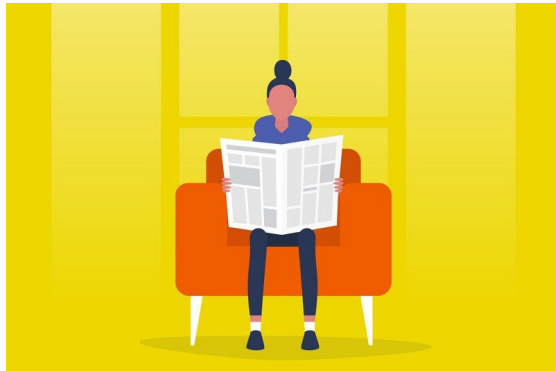
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Research Question & Hypotheses

RESEARCH QUESTION

When **reading an editorial** that advocates in favor of **perceiving sexual harassment (SH) as a serious issue**, does the **gender of the journalist influence later attitudes** on perceived severity of SH?



HYPOTHESES

- H1a** Individuals exposed to **anti-SH editorials** → will indicate **higher perceived severity** of SH
- H1b** *larger effect for women*
- H2** **Men reading male journalists**, instead of female journalists → will perceive SH as a **more severe issue**
- H3** After reading anti-SH editorial, **sympathy** towards victims → will be **higher among women** than among men

Research Design

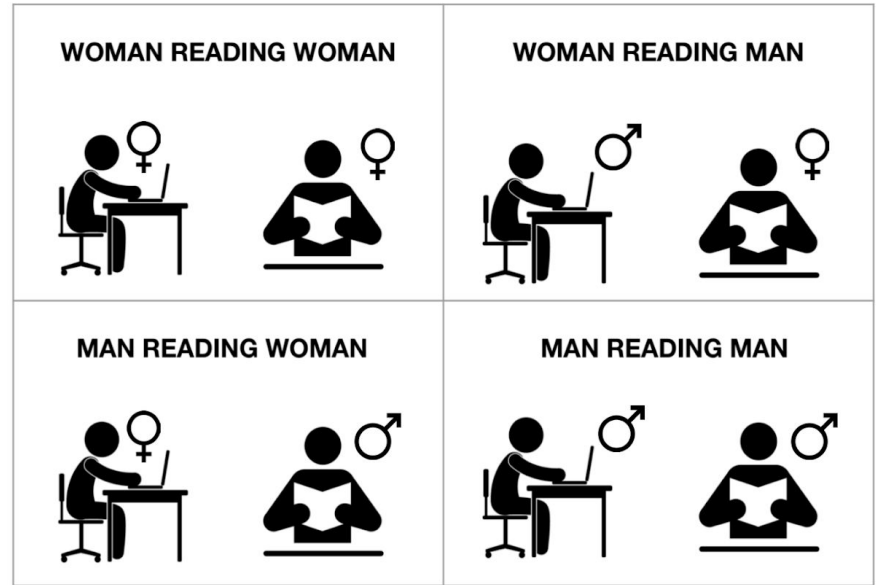
DESIGN

2 (gender of participant: male/female)
x 2 (gender of journalist: male/female)
x 2 (control message) between-subjects

Random assignment to conditions



EXPERIMENTAL CONDITIONS



+ CONTROL GROUPS

(female/male participants reading unrelated message, in which gender of author was unidentified)

Procedure



1

Pre-treatment measure:

Gender of participants

n = 211
F = 51%

2

Treatment:

Random assignment to conditions:

- (1) reading **woman**,
- (2) reading **man**,
- (3) **control** message

3

Attention check

(98% correct)

4

DV1:

Sympathy toward victims

5

DV2:

Perceived severity of sexual harassment

6

DV3:

Click on anti-SH website (behavioral measure)

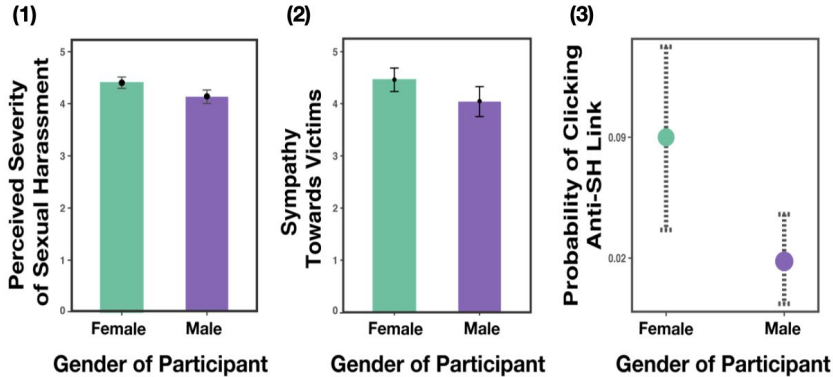
7

Manipulation check

(93% correct)

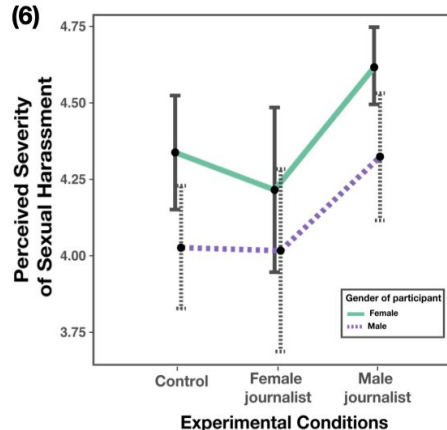
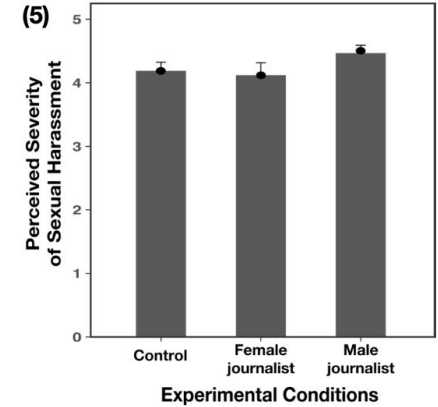
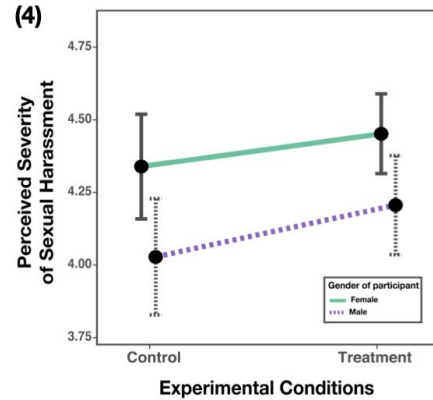
Results

DESCRIPTIVE FINDINGS



Regardless of treatment conditions, everyone perceives SH as a severe issue, but evidence suggests that (1) women perceive it as a more severe issue than men, (2) feel more sympathy towards SH victims, and (3) are more likely to want to learn how to fight SH

EXPERIMENTAL FINDINGS



Evidence suggests that reading an anti-SH editorial (4) makes individuals perceive SH as a more severe issue. Regardless of the gender of the reader, (5) male journalists who advocate against SH are more persuasive than female journalists. As seen in (6), female readers are significantly more persuaded in favor or perceiving SH as a more severe issue after reading male journalists.

Discussion

- Why are women more persuaded to believe that SH is a serious issue after reading male journalists? One explanation could be **novelty**: possibly women are more used to listening to other women talk about SH than other men.
- Or are men always more persuasive, regardless of the topic? To test this proposition, future research should **control both for topic** (other gendered and non-gendered issues), and for **message characteristics**. Results could respond to certain specificities of the narrative.
- The editorials cited testimonies of SH victims, but these were all female. Future research should also **manipulate gender of the victims** to test for the interaction effects between gender of the reader, the victim and the journalist.
- Future studies should also explore if **sympathy operates as a mediator** and if higher levels of feelings of sympathy among men can help reduce the gender gap in perceived severity of SH.
- That women are less persuasive than men when it comes to issues that affect them more is concerning. For better or for worse, these results suggest that promoting the feminist agenda needs of **male allies**. More broadly, that the coverage of gender issues can promote social change.

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