

**The Role of Gender in Challenging Sexism:
Unravelling Different Reactions to Offensive Comments**

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the influence of gender and different responses on changing norms regarding sexist comments. A sample of 136 male participants above 16 years old, primarily from Western European countries, engaged in an online study involving video stimuli across six different conditions. The data was analysed by performing an ANCOVA. The hypothesis that gender would have a significant effect on norms was not supported. However, significant differences emerged based on response conditions. We compared direct confrontation, using humour, and changing the topic as reactions following the sexist remark. Specifically, responding to an offensive comment in a humorous way elicits the most substantial change, normalizing the sexist comment. Additionally, the study reveals noteworthy findings regarding the differential consequences of humour depending on the gender of the individual employing it. These findings have implications for both future research and educational initiatives.

Keywords: sexist remarks, gender differences, video study, confronting sexism

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The Issue of Sexism

Sexism is “the systematic inequitable treatment of girls and women by men and by the society as a whole” (Bearman et al., 2009) and is a widespread issue that affects all aspects of life, including the workplace and family. Unfortunately, women often face unequal treatment, which can result in them being denied opportunities.¹ Evidently, a mere 4% of large companies have a female CEO (Sawyer & Valerio, 2018), highlighting the significant underrepresentation of women in top leadership positions. Even when women manage to overcome these barriers, they may still experience sexism and harassment, such as sexist comments and jokes (Brooks & Perot, 1991). These experiences not only create a hostile work environment but also perpetuate gender inequality and restrict women's advancement.

To compound the issue, sexism possesses unique characteristics that differentiate it from other forms of discrimination. What sets sexism apart from racism for example, is that many people desire women to fulfil their stereotypical roles (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). Perhaps as a result of this, sexism may be perceived as less severe than other types of discrimination (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). Additionally, sexism can take on different forms, including both hostile (i.e., undervaluing women) and benevolent sexism. The latter can be especially difficult to recognize and confront because it may appear caring and harmless but can still perpetuate gender inequality (Good & Sanchez, 2018). These forms of sexism intertwine, making it challenging to address

¹ Please note that in the following paragraphs, we will only be using the terms "men" and "women". However, we acknowledge that these terms may not encompass all gender identities.

and dismantle the underlying biases that fuel gender inequality. Furthermore, an additional challenge with sexism is that it can easily spread if it is not addressed (Koudenberg et al., 2021).

Comments are not just Comments

One manifestation of sexism is the use of sexist comments, which can have negative impacts on individuals and perpetuate harmful gender norms (Koudenberg et al., 2021). Sexist jokes are pervasive and are often perceived as a loophole, with some people believing that they are not as sexist as blatant comments (Mallet et al., 2016). However, even seemingly harmless jokes can have a significant impact because they contribute to the normalization of discrimination. When men hear sexist jokes more often, they may perceive it as more acceptable to discriminate against people based on their gender (Ford, 2000).

It has been demonstrated that the way individuals respond to sexist comments can have a significant impact on the normalization of these behaviours (Saucier et al. 2020). For instance, research has demonstrated that a man who makes a sexist comment is the least liked by onlookers when a woman reacts with subtle disapproval, such as by pausing the conversation (Saucier et al., 2020).

While confrontation may be effective, this is not true for all confronters. Individuals who are the targets of sexist remarks are often taken less seriously than those who are not targeted when confronting the comment (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). In order to effectively combat prejudice, men are expected to be more effective in confronting offensive remarks. Because men are not directly affected by sexism, they are often seen as better positioned to challenge and address it (Czopp & Monteith, 2003).

Research Question

Sexist comments and jokes are pervasive in our society, contributing to a less safe and welcoming environment for women. While it is widely acknowledged that confronting these comments is an important step in challenging and changing these harmful norms, little is known about the factors that influence the effectiveness of these confrontations. In particular, it is unclear whether the gender of the person confronting the sexist comment plays a role in shaping subsequent attitudes and behaviours. In this study, we seek to address this gap in the literature by investigating the following research question: Does the confronter's gender influence the norms that emerge following a confrontation of a sexist comment? By exploring the potential role of gender in shaping attitudes and behaviours around sexist comments, we hope to identify new strategies for effectively challenging and changing these norms. Another area of investigation concerns the various types of responses. Hence, the second research question emerges: Does the type of response following a sexist comment have an influence on the norms?

Identifying the Gap in Research

Previous research has shown that civil rights movements can influence and change societal norms (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). However, most of this research has focused on larger-scale societal changes, and there is limited research on how individuals can effectively confront and change norms in smaller social circles. While some research has indicated that confrontations, as opposed to laughing off sexist comments, may be more effective in changing societal norms (Saucier et al., 2020), there is still a gap in the literature regarding the role of gender in changing norms when confronting sexism. To date, only one study has directly addressed this contrast (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). However, the focus was not on norms but on individual feelings of guilt and self-criticism. Furthermore, the method used in that study, which asked participants to imagine a situation they experienced, may not fully capture the nuances of

real-world interactions. Despite these limitations, the study by Czopp and Monteith (2003) did provide valuable insights, such as the finding that male confronters were perceived as more influential and elicited more guilt when the comment was made by a man. Therefore, there is a need for further research to explore the role of gender more comprehensively in the effectiveness of confronting sexism and changing norms in small-group situations.

Components, Challenges, and Strategies within the Persistence of Sexism

Norms are the rules that govern our society and dictate what is expected of us (Bicchieri et al., 2022). In the context of sexism, norms can be changed through repeated exposure to sexist comments. As Ford (2000) notes, the feeling of guilt for sexist behaviour decreases after hearing such comments more often. Confronting this sexist behaviour can serve to reinforce group norms and remind individuals of their responsibility to adhere to them (Czopp & Monteith, 2003).

Norms are formed and can be changed through culture and tradition but also through group dynamics in daily interactions with people around us. Communication is a fundamental aspect of human interaction and plays a crucial role in shaping and reinforcing norms and attitudes. It plays a significant role in shaping our understanding of gender roles and power dynamics for example (Bussey & Bandura, 1984). Our conversations are not just about exchanging information but serve also as a display of social structure and hierarchy. Sexism, in particular, can be perpetuated through language and conversation, whether through the reinforcement of gender stereotypes or the silencing of certain individuals based on their gender (Joyce et al., 2021). Respectful and inclusive communication is important because it shapes our interaction unconsciously and avoiding making assumptions based on stereotypes or biases can help to create a more inclusive and constructive conversation (Weatherall, 2021). A flowing conversation symbolizes that people are on the same page. This can be disrupted or reinforced by

seemingly small details, such as pauses or confrontations (Koudenburg et al., 2021). For instance, when a discriminatory comment is made and no one confronts it, it can signal to others that such behaviour is accepted within the group (Koudenburg et al., 2021). However, confronting such comments can serve as a reminder that the displayed behaviour is not consistent with group norms (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). In addition to directly addressing sexism, employing humour can be another strategy. By doing so, the potential social backlash faced by the individual confronting the issue can be reduced, making the act of confrontation easier. The appeal of using humour as a response to a sexist remark varies between genders. Research conducted by Woodzicka et al. (2020) reveals that approximately 16% of women compared to only 4.5% of men would use humour as a means of response in such situations.

In our society, men often hold more power than women, which can make it risky for women to confront sexist behaviour displayed by men. Confrontations over sexist comments are shaped by social status and group membership, in addition to social norms surrounding gender. Research has shown that individuals are more likely to confront offensive behaviour when they are in a position of power and have less to lose by doing so (Keltner et al., 2008). Conversely, those in less powerful positions may be unlikely to stand up for themselves when confronted with sexist behaviour (Ashburn-Nardo et al., 2008). Furthermore, men who confront sexist comments are generally viewed positively by other men, according to different studies (Rasinski & Czopp, 2010). By confronting sexism, men can play an active role in combating it without jeopardizing their social standing. They can draw other men's attention to the issue and demonstrate that confronting sexism is a viable solution. This way, they can gain more and risk less, as their confrontations are taken more seriously and considered more legitimate (Drury & Kaiser 2014).

Petty et al. (2001) found that people pay more attention to surprising details in conversations and consider unexpected content more closely. In the context of sexism, this means that a confronting comment by a man receives more attention and is listened to more closely than a comment by a woman because this would be expected (Drury & Kaiser, 2014). If a confrontation comes from someone in the same group as the target, it may be seen as an attempt to gain an advantage for their own group or as an overreaction (Czopp & Monteith, 2003). This interaction also influences our perception of what is acceptable.

When confronted with an offensive remark, people's desire to be seen in a particular way can influence how they respond. Research indicates that, overall, women tend to value respect over being liked (Mallet et al., 2016). However, individual differences exist, and these differences can be linked to how women respond to offensive comments. Women who prioritize being respected are more likely to speak up, while those who value being liked are less likely to confront sexism (Mallet & Melchiori, 2014). Studies have found that after confronting it, women are respected the same but liked less by men, while women continue to like and respect them equally (Dodd et al., 2001). One explanation for this could be that men prefer it when people conform to traditional gender roles (Knight & Giuliano, 2001) and in our society, women face gender role expectations that often dictate passivity in the face of discrimination (Swim et al., 1998). Opposing a sexist comment can also be met with amusement, which may lead to less confrontation in the future. This response can give the impression that the offensive remark is a shared opinion, and therefore, contribute to the perpetuation of sexist attitudes (Czopp & Monteith, 2003).

In conclusion, addressing sexist comments requires ongoing conversations, awareness of social norms and power dynamics, and an understanding of how people's desire for likability or respect can influence their response to discrimination.

Hypotheses

Given that sexism is inherently connected to gender, it is hypothesized that the gender of the confronter plays a significant role in shaping how individuals perceive and respond to the societal norms associated with sexism, as gender is intricately linked to both the manifestation and experience of sexist attitudes and behaviours. Drawing from prior research indicating that outgroup confrontation tends to be perceived more favourably and taken more seriously, it is hypothesized that significant changes in societal norms will occur when a man shows a response to a sexist remark regardless of the kind of response (H1).

Building upon previous literature, we propose that individual's responses to a sexist remark play a significant role. In this regard, we hypothesize that the norms surrounding the offensive comment change depending on the displayed response (H2).

The present research

The present research aims to test the impact of the gender of the confronter on the change of norms related to sexist comments. To achieve this goal, an online study will be conducted using a video presentation where either a man or a woman reacts to a sexist comment made by a man. This video approach is intended to provide a more realistic situation and improve upon previous studies, where participants only imagined situations involving prejudice.

Method

Participants

The participants in this study were all men above the age of 16. A total of 179 participants were recruited through online forums like the participants pool of psychology students from the University of Groningen SONA where students can earn credits for participating in studies and snowballing via social media, platforms, and our personal network. We provided SONA members with suitable credits and non-SONA individuals with the opportunity to win a 15 Euro bol.com voucher as an incentive. Overall, there was an attrition rate of 29%, however, because I focus on questions asked at the beginning of the study, more people completed those questions, and I used 136 participants for my analysis. The main nationalities were Dutch ($n = 98$) and German ($n = 32$). The average age was 26 years ($sd = 10.51$) ranging from 17 to 72 years. However, the majority (69%) of our participants were between 20 and 25 years old.

Design and Measures

We conducted a study with a two (gender of confronter: male vs female) by three (response: humour vs direct confrontation vs change of topic) between-subject design. The dependent variables measured in the study are norms, future behaviour, warmth and competence, awareness of sexism, status and respect and the cohesion of the group. Moderators in this study are plausible deniability, feminism, gender, and context. The focus lies on the variable norms.

All items were rated on a 7-point Likert scale. Participants' perceptions of group norms were assessed ranging from "not at all" to "very". The items "In this group, how normal is it to make this remark?", "In this group, how appropriate is it to make this remark?", "In this group, how funny is it to make this remark?", and "How likely is it that you would make a similar remark in a group like this?" were combined to the scale "Norms". We constructed those items ourselves. They were coded as NormsPre, before the reaction was shown, and the same questions

were asked later again and coded as NormsPost. The scale for norms prior to the reaction has a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.847$ and the scale for norms after the reaction shows a Cronbach's alpha of $\alpha = 0.886$.

To confirm the effectiveness of our manipulation, a separate scale was employed to check if the remark and the reactions were perceived the way it was intended. Specifically, we will compare the mean scores for statements such as "In response to the remark made by Paul, Tom/Lucy used humour" to determine if the humour condition yielded higher scores compared to the confrontational or topic change conditions. To assess the perceived level of direct confrontation, we asked participants to rate the statement "Tom/Lucy confronted the remark made by Paul" and will look at differences between the three condition means. Furthermore, we sought to examine whether the humorous confrontation was interpreted as sarcastic, and thus, we will analyse the answers to the statement "In response to the remark made by Paul, Tom/Lucy used sarcasm" and compare the average for Tom to the one for Lucy. In order to address concerns about the potential development of a joking atmosphere among men due to Tom's humorous response, we inquired about the emergence of subgroups between the two men and the women: "After the remark by Paul, subgroups emerged between the two men and the women". We will compare the score for Tom with the one for Lucy in the humour condition to explore more differences due to the gender of the confronter.

Procedure

Participants were assured that their participation was voluntary and that their responses would be kept confidential. They provided informed consent prior to participation in the study and were debriefed upon completion. The participants were asked to complete the study online on their device of choice, in their own personal setting. The study was in English, and it was

recommended to use headphones for optimal sound. In the study, participants were asked to watch a video of a group of four young adults, two men and two women, having a conversation about their holidays. Then, one of the two men makes a sexist remark after one of the women mentioned having had a female pilot: “A woman? Most women can’t even drive a car, why is she allowed to fly a plane?”. The participants were instructed to imagine they were the person making that comment. The video lasted for 22 seconds, after which participants were asked to answer questions about the norms and disapproval surrounding the comment and whether they believed the man expressed his true beliefs. The participants were randomly assigned to one of six experimental conditions and watched the same video with the following different responses: either a man or a woman reacted either with humour, direct confrontation or change of topic. This was followed by a series of questions assessing the remaining independent variables. The present study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the RUG.

Tom joking: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3SFpOrhFWSE&feature=youtu.be>

Tom confronting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iLZbmC-iJnM>

Tom changing the topic: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2X4X2EnkHv0>

Lucy joking: <https://youtu.be/uohxdl-k91g>

Lucy confronting: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XjumQM2ZUnI>

Lucy changing the topic: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MqiqWKgJ04o>

Analysis Plan

The analysis was conducted using the statistical software IBM SPSS 28. We conducted an analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) to examine the impact of gender and response on norms. The independent variables are response condition and gender of the responder, the dependent

variable if the change of norms. Additionally, the norms score prior to the response was included as a continuous covariate in the analysis.

We used a significance level of $p < 0.05$ and confidence interval of 95%. A formal power analysis was conducted prior to the study to estimate the required sample size, taking into account the anticipated effect sizes, significance level, and desired power level. The power of the study was determined afterwards with 136 participants and is in the medium area with 0.64.

We checked the assumption of normality, independence and homogeneity and they were only partly met, however, we continued with the analysis to see potential effects. Normality was not met, however an ANCOVA can still be performed because it is robust to that (Olejnik & Algina, 1984). Independence was ensured because we had random sample allocation and the assumption of homogeneity is met as well. The sample was equally distributed across all six conditions ($n=21, n=22, n=22, n=22, n=24, n=25$).

Results

Results indicated that the norms surrounding the sexist comment did not exhibit significant changes overall ($M_{pre} = 2.089, M_{post} = 2.063$), $t(135) = -0.604, p = 0.54$. There was a difference detected in Norms-Post scores between the woman ($M = 2.199$) and man ($M = 1.921$) as responder but the main effect of gender was not significant, $F(1,129) = 0.425, p = 0.516$ as shown in Table 1. Therefore, H1 suggesting a significant impact of the gender of the responder on norms was not supported. However, it is noteworthy that the response itself influenced the norms significantly, $F(2,129) = 8.329, p < 0.001$. The effect size of the responses was large with $\eta^2 = 0.104$. This result supports our H2. The response category "Humour" yielded the highest mean score for post-norms ($M = 2.42$), followed by "Confrontation" ($M = 1.89$), and "Change of Topic" ($M = 1.86$) (Table 2). "Confrontation" and "Change of topic" were not significant

different ($p = 0.599$). Looking into the direction of this effect and comparing the norms prior to the response with the norms post response for each condition, one can see that the mean of “Humour” increased while it decreased slightly for “Confrontation” and “Change of Topic” (Table 1). There was no significant interaction effect between gender and response, $F(2,129) = 0.702, p = 0.498$.

These scores were adjusted for pre-scores of the norms because the pre-scores were not the same across conditions. The condition “Humour” had a lower average ($M = 1.71, sd = 1.01$) compared to “Change of topic” ($M = 2.01, sd = 1.36$) and “Confrontation” ($M = 2.27, sd = 1.47$). We conducted a manipulation check, which confirmed the effectiveness of our manipulation. Across all conditions, the mean responses for the respective question were consistently higher compared to the other conditions. For instance, to assess the impact of the humour condition, we posed the question, "In response to the remark made by Paul, Tom utilized humour." The results revealed the highest mean response in the "Humour" condition ($M_{Humour} = 4.50$), while the mean responses for the other condition and showed a lower mean ($M_{Confrontation} = 2.90, M_{Change of Topic} = 3.14$). During our manipulation check, we also examined perceived sarcasm and the perceived formation of subgroups based on gender in an exploratory manner to find further explanations. Notably, Tom's humorous confrontation demonstrated a lower level of sarcasm ($M = 4.15$) compared to Lucy using the same response ($M = 5.39$). When looking at emerging subgroups, Tom's confrontation with humour yielded the highest result compared with all other conditions ($M = 4.25$), even higher than Lucy's confrontation with humour ($M = 3.35$).

Table 1*ANCOVA Table*

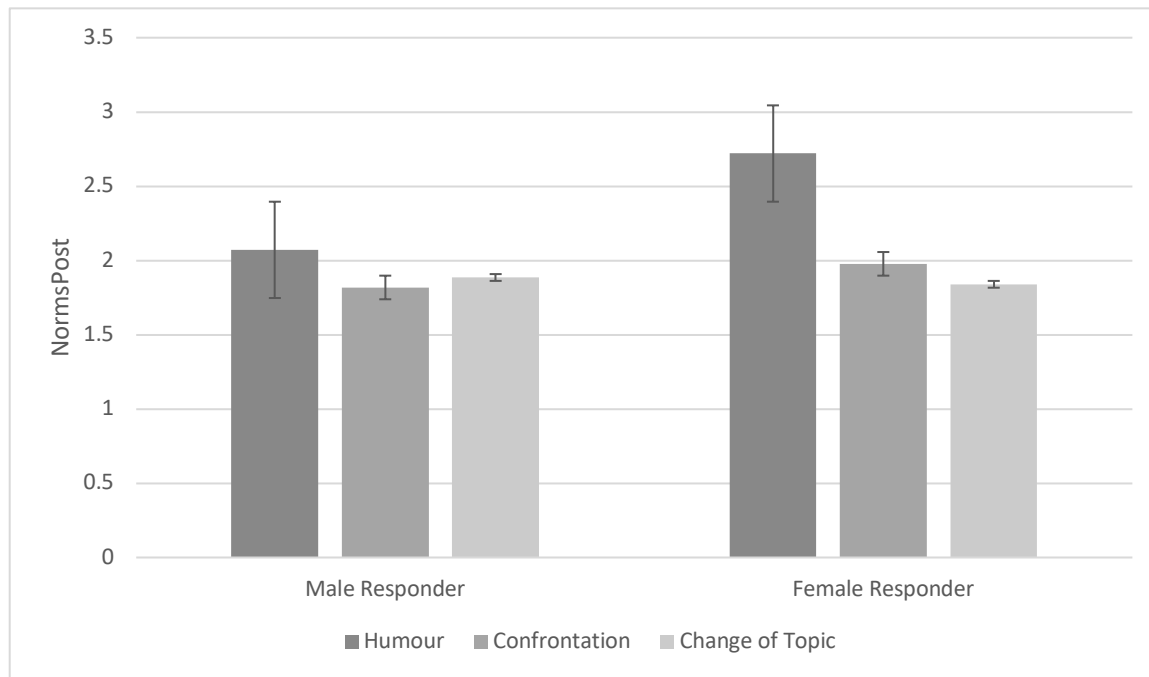
Source	Type III Sum of Squares	<i>df</i>	Mean Square	<i>F</i>	Sig.	Partial Eta Squared
genderresponder	0.521	1	0.521	0.425	0.516	0.003
responsecondition	18.450	2	9.225	7.527	<0.001	0.104
genderresponder *responsecondition	1.720	2	0.860	0.702	0.498	0.011
Error	158.103	129	1.226			
Total	827.125	136				

Note: Dependent Variable: NormsPost**Table 2***Comparing Means*

responsecondition		NormsPre	NormsPost
Humour	Mean	1.717	2.424
	N	46	46
	Std. Deviation	1.016	1.477
Direct Confrontation	Mean	2.272	1.898
	N	44	44
	Std. Deviation	1.470	1.213
Changing the Topic	Mean	2.010	1.859
	N	46	46
	Std. Deviation	1.228	1.316
Total	Mean	1.996	2.063
	N	136	136
	Std. Deviation	1.259	1.357

Figure 1

Means of Norms post reaction, controlled for Norms prior per condition gender and response



Note: Error bars showing the standard error

Discussion

Findings

Our survey yields important findings regarding the impact of reactions to sexist remarks on norms about sexism. Interestingly, we found no substantial effect of gender on the change of norms. Whether a man or woman confronted the sexist comment, it did not significantly influence the alteration of norms. Thus, gender alone does not appear to be a determining factor in shaping normative attitudes towards sexism and H1 is not supported by our study.

We did find that the way people responded to sexist remarks made a difference and therefore, our study supports H2. Humour emerged as the reaction that resulted in the most

significant change in norms, making the offensive comment more acceptable. Despite initially having the lowest pre-scores, humour demonstrated the most substantial change, as evidenced by its highest post-scores, indicating a significant shift in norms. Direct confrontation and changing the topic did not display a significant disparity in their impact on norm change, both conditions made the comment less normative.

Possible Explanations

One plausible explanation for the high scoring, and therefore normalization of the comment, of humour as a response to sexist remarks is that it effectively mitigates the perceived responsibility and offensiveness associated with such comments. Our manipulation check shows that the use of humour was perceived as less confrontational and more simply humorous. This response could have made the initial remark seem like a joke as well which makes it less offensive and more tolerable. These findings align with previous research conducted by Ford (2000) and Mallet et al. (2016), which suggests that sexist jokes are perceived as less severe than explicit sexist comments, while still contributing to the normalization of discrimination. Even though the effect of gender is not significant in our study, a trend can be observed when it comes to the humour condition. Specifically, we observed that the use of humour by male confronters was perceived as even less confrontational compared to the female confronter. This might have an effect on the whole group as the findings about the subgroups suggest. The results on emerging subgroups between genders, particularly evident when Tom uses humour, propose that this response may unintentionally foster an impression of two men engaging in jokes at the expense of women.

Contrary to prior literature suggesting that any active reaction is more effective than no confrontation (Saucier et al., 2020), our findings provide evidence that one of the active reactions

(using humour) had a harmful effect, further normalizing the sexist comment, while the other one only indicates a small positive effect (direct confrontation). Therefore, the distinction cannot be made simply between active and inactive responses. Rather, one must look at the specific kind of active response to see which one is the most effective.

Implications

This study is significant as it addresses sexism, changing norms, and the potential for empowerment. Sexism remains prevalent in society, and understanding effective strategies to challenge and address sexist remarks is crucial for promoting gender equality. By studying the effects of different responses to sexist remarks on norms, this research contributes to understanding how individual actions can influence and potentially shift societal norms towards greater gender equality. This knowledge can guide efforts to challenge and change harmful norms, fostering more inclusive and respectful communities.

Awareness of the effectiveness of humour, direct confrontation, or ignoring can help individuals to choose the response that aligns with their values, personality, and goals. It helps individuals understand that their reactions can have an impact on the normalization of sexist behaviour and encourages them to assertively challenge such remarks, fostering a sense of agency. Additionally, the findings of this research can inform the development of policies and practices in various domains, such as workplaces, educational institutions, and social settings. It can guide the creation of guidelines, training programs, and interventions that effectively address sexism and create environments that promote equality, respect, and inclusivity. Strategies that encourage direct confrontation, while considering individual comfort levels and safety, may be incorporated into such initiatives.

The findings indicate that the gender of the person confronting sexist remarks does not have a significant impact on norm change. This highlights the importance of encouraging everyone, regardless of their gender, to actively engage in the fight against sexism.

Importantly, the finding that humour changes the norms in a negative direction educates on the potential pitfalls of humour. It makes people recognize that relying on humour as a response to sexist remarks may have unintended consequences, such as normalizing or downplaying the seriousness of such comments. Educational initiatives should highlight the potential risks of using humour inappropriately and encourage individuals to critically assess the impact of their responses.

Learnings

Through the process of conducting this study, we gathered valuable experience and several key takeaways. Firstly, we have recognized the need for a larger and more diverse participant pool. Even though our sample has a sufficient size to discover large effects, it is important to acknowledge that a larger sample size offers the potential to detect even small-sized effects. Moreover, we have gained an understanding of the limitations associated with snowball sampling as a primary recruitment method. We opted for this sampling technique as it offers a practical approach that aligns with our research objectives. Specifically, we wanted to gather a sample comprising individuals who would resemble the actors featured in the video, thus facilitating their ability to imagine themselves within the depicted scenario. However, the tendency for individuals to recruit others from similar socioeconomic backgrounds and cultural contexts can result in a sample that lacks diversity (Kirchherr & Charles, 2018). Therefore, it is essential for us to explore alternative recruitment methods to ensure a more comprehensive

representation of the phenomenon under investigation, thereby enhancing the external validity of our results.

In addition, we have recognized the importance of obtaining normative reactions during the whole filming process. By aligning the responses of our male and female participants, Tom and Lucy, considering gender as the primary differentiating factor, we could isolate and examine the specific influence of gender on the observed reactions. Our research findings indicate that Lucy received higher scores than Tom on the sarcasm scale, and this observation aligns with the feedback provided by participants, who noted that Lucy's response appeared more sarcastic rather than humorous. We have to consider the possibility that this is due to differences in acting. Notably, these results are contradicting previous literature, such as the work by Johnson and Kreuz (2020), which suggests that men are typically perceived to be more sarcastic than women.

During our study, we have learned that establishing a control group in studies like ours presents inherent difficulties since every reaction observed can be considered a response in itself. However, it is important to note that these challenges did not have a significant impact on the results of our study. This is primarily because our focus was on comparing and analysing different responses rather than establishing a direct comparison with a traditional control group. Instead of a classical control group, we employed a quasi-control condition, namely the "Change of topic" condition. We decided to use this as our control condition because we assumed this to be the most common response.

Limitations

Our study has revealed several noteworthy limitations. As previously mentioned, the sample we utilized for our research exhibited a relatively homogenous profile. The lack of diversity within the sample, particularly in terms of age representation, poses a significant

challenge. The sample we worked with was quite young overall. Moreover, it is worth noting that the prevailing norms observed within our sample were generally characterized by a low level of sexism. However, it is conceivable that this trend may differ among older generations (Cronin & Jreisat, 1995). Therefore, caution must be exercised when extrapolating these findings to other demographic groups. Additionally, considering the cultural variations in manifestations of sexism, it is crucial to acknowledge the influence of cultural context when interpreting our findings (Glick et al., 2000). Again, our sample represents mainly two Western European countries, the Netherlands and Germany. We were not able to analyse how cultural norms, values, and attitudes toward gender influence the outcomes of different response strategies to sexist comments. Our research question can still be effectively addressed; however, it is important to note that the results should be interpreted within the context of our specific sample type.

This study encountered a lack of diversity regarding the individuals responsible for making sexist comments. It is important to note that assessing sexist remarks made by other groups, such as women, would entail examining a distinct manifestation of sexism known as internalized misogyny (Szymanski et al., 2009). This specific form of sexism is directed towards women themselves. However, in our research, we chose to concentrate on the most prevalent type of sexism observed: that which occurs when a man directs sexist comments towards women. The inclusion of women and individuals of diverse gender identities as participants in future research is an important avenue to explore. In our study, we made a deliberate decision to limit the participation to men to make it easier to put themselves into the position of the perpetrator. This choice was made to specifically examine the dynamics of sexism perpetuated by men towards women. However, for a more comprehensive understanding of the subject, it

would be valuable to involve women and or non-binary people as participants in future studies. Furthermore, it would be interesting to investigate intersectionality. Reactions to sexist remarks may differ based on the intersecting identities of individuals, such as race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status.

Another limitation might be the use of self-report measures. The reliance on self-report measures to assess changes in norms, feminism, and character traits introduces potential biases, such as social desirability bias (Nederhof, 1985). However, there is no reason to believe that this would be different across conditions and therefore does not have an impact on our results. Future studies could consider incorporating additional objective measures or behavioural observations to supplement the self-report data and provide a more comprehensive assessment of changes.

Future research

Future studies should assess contextual considerations. Considering the context in which sexist remarks are made and responded to might change the effectiveness of different response strategies. The perception of norms may vary depending on factors such as power dynamics, the relationship between individuals involved, and the setting in which the comment is made (Gervais & Hillard, 2014).

For future research, we highly recommend looking into long-term effects. To explore the lasting impact of different reactions to sexist remarks over an extended period researchers can conduct follow-up studies and make statements about future behaviour. It is important to note that our study had a short-term focus. Our examination primarily assessed changes in norms and other attitudes following the viewing of the videos immediately. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the lasting effects of sexist remarks and the resulting reactions, it is crucial to conduct research that expands over a longer time.

Lastly, different methods could be used to investigate the topic of sexism in the future. Adopting a mixed-methods approach, which combines quantitative data collected through surveys with qualitative methods like interviews or focus groups, would offer valuable and novel insights. This comprehensive approach would enable a deeper understanding of participants' experiences, perceptions, and the contextual factors influencing their reactions and subsequent changes in norms.

Conclusion

In conclusion, our study found that exposure to different reactions to sexist remarks led to significant changes in norms while the gender of the confronter did not significantly influence norm change. Humour resulted in the most significant change, making the comment more normal, while direct confrontation and change of topic showed a comparable impact. Overall, the study contributes to understanding the fight against sexism and informs interventions promoting gender equality.

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