

**The Moderating Role of Benevolent Sexism on the Relationship Between Job
Advertisement Stereotypicality and Application Intentions Among Females**

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PSB3E-BT15: Bachelor Thesis

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April 25, 2022

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Abstract

Previous research has found that women prefer to apply for female stereotypically-worded job advertisements (Kutscher, 2021; Wulf, 2019). However, as far as we know, no study has yet investigated how this is influenced by sexism. The current research investigated whether the extent to which women are sexist moderates the extent to which gender stereotypes in job advertisements influence their application intentions. We assumed that females scoring high on benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996) differ from females scoring low on benevolent sexism in their intention to apply for a female versus a male stereotypically-written job advertisement; this is because they are expected to be more gender conforming and therefore find their abilities and interests better reflected in the female rather than the male stereotypical job advertisement. An online experimental study was conducted ($N = 149$), in which gender stereotypicality in job advertisements was manipulated (female versus male), and benevolent sexism was included as a moderator. However, neither women who were high on benevolent sexism, nor those who scored low on it, were more likely to apply for a female rather than a male stereotypically-worded job advertisement. Interestingly, an exploratory analysis revealed that participants scoring low on benevolent sexism, perceived the female stereotypic job to be more stereotypical for women than the male stereotypic job, while those scoring high on benevolent sexism did not. This suggests that less sexist women are more aware of gender stereotypical wording in job descriptions than more sexist women. Implications of the findings are discussed.

Keywords: benevolent sexism, job advertisement, stereotypes, application intention

The Moderating Role of Benevolent Sexism on the Relationship Between Job Advertisement Stereotypicality and Application Intentions Among Females

Governmental measurements that aim to improve gender equality show that there is still work to do (European Commission, 2018). One example of such measures is the application of a female quota for specific job positions and areas. This quota aims to assure a certain percentage of women in leading positions. However, it “may give women a seat at the table, but that does not automatically come with the power and authority to have a real influence” (Geys, 2020, p.1). Furthermore, there still seems to be a gender gap regarding leadership positions and careers: even though there is a major increase in female college graduates (more than half of the graduates are females), they just make up about one quarter of academic leadership positions (Lennon, 2013). This trend can also be observed in the political sector: “Women in Congress introduce more bills, attract more co-sponsors, and bring more money to their home districts than their male counterparts” (Lennon, 2013, p.133), but again, they only represent approximately one quarter of the total number of constitutional and presidential positions (Lennon, 2013). This does not suggest there is a general lack of ability in females to carry out such jobs, nor any capability for females to qualify for them. However, measures like the female quota make no difference when women are hesitant (or refuse) to apply for such job positions. Thus, the disproportion of women and men in some professions may be better explained in terms of application intentions than by the number of possible job offers reserved for male or female applicants (women quota). Accordingly, the inequality in these occupations is not due to missing employment possibilities (because this is what the women quota assumes), but because women hesitate to apply for these jobs. However, application intentions might be just one explanation for women being underrepresented in leading positions. Another rationale is, for example, that most leading positions are male dominated – men tend to recruit other men for these job positions from

their closer social or work environment, who are most alike to themselves (Cullen & Perez-Truglia, 2019), thus, leaving little chance for women to be promoted.

Regarding application intentions, one factor that is known to influence application intentions is the particular wording of job advertisements (Kutscher, 2021; van der Nat, 2019; Wulf, 2019): females tend to preferably apply to female-worded job advertisements (i.e., those who use female-stereotypical adjectives to describe the job requirements). The question is whether this applies to all women. It is known that women often have female-stereotypical jobs (International Labour Organization, 2020) and that many women self-stereotype themselves in more gender traditional ways as well (Hentschel et al., 2019). Thus, it remains to be answered whether or not gender stereotypical wording of job advertisements only influences women who advocate traditional gender norms.

In this study, we investigate the influence of female versus male stereotypically-worded job advertisements on application intentions in women, and the extent to which this is moderated by benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). We expect that women who score higher on benevolent sexism will have a higher preference to apply for the female stereotypically-written job advertisement than for the male stereotypically-written job advertisement.

Gender Stereotypes in Job Advertisements

An existing body of research shows that many possible factors are influencing the job application process. One known variable is self-confidence, as most often women miss the necessary confidence that would allow them to apply for jobs (Clark, 2014). However, this is a characteristic of the applicant. There is a growing body of literature recognizing non-applicant-related aspects to be influential in the application process as well. In particular, the wording of job advertisements was found to influence the application intention in females (Gaucher et al., 2011; Hentschel et al., 2021; Kutscher, 2021; Wulf, 2019).

Gaucher et al. (2011) suggest that there is at least some evidence that (1) more masculine-characterized words are used in job advertisements for domains with more male than female workers, and that (2) an increase in the number of these words is already enough to not only decrease the perceived attractiveness in women for these jobs, but also their desire to belong in these job fields (Gaucher et al., 2011). This trend is not only observed in specific job domains, but also in different job positions: most job advertisements, particularly higher-order positions, are written in a distinctly masculine way (Spitzer et al., 2018). This may explain why there are more males in some job domains and job positions than females: there could be an underlying process of self-reinforcement in which male-dominated job fields and positions recruit even more males by presenting more male-oriented job advertisements for which men prefer to apply more than women.

Moreover, an analysis of recommendation letters revealed that even though men and women established equal competence, masculine recommendation letters were worded more outstanding than feminine recommendation letters (Schmader et al., 2007), which may give men a higher motivation to apply for jobs in general, and especially for higher-order positions; their stated 'outstanding accomplishments' better match the job requirements outlined in (top position) job advertisements. Further, regardless of their actual qualifications, men may experience a confidence boost from these recommendation letters, so that they are more inclined to apply for jobs even though they know they would not meet the job requirements. In fact, in contrast to their male counterparts, females tend to apply for job promotions only when they are most (i.e., 100%) confident that they are qualified for them. For males, this is true if they feel they would meet more than half (60%) of the conditions (Clark, 2014). These findings indicate that wording seems to be a powerful influence on application intentions through both recommendation letters and job advertisements.

Traditionally, females are stereotyped as having nurturing, affiliative and empathic characteristics, which are also referred to as communal traits. Males, in contrast, are stereotyped as being more ambitious, assertive and autonomous, thus, being instrumentally-oriented (Larsen et al., 2017). Thus, women and men are stereotypically distinct from each other; and so are their interests (Su et al., 2009) and needs (Brandts et al., 2021; Gómez-Baya et al., 2018; Rustin & Foels, 2012). A study by Hentschel et al. (2021) revealed, “that when a male recruiter used stereotypically masculine compared to feminine wording, female students anticipated lower belongingness, expected lower success of an application, and indicated lower application intentions for career opportunities” (Hentschel et al., 2021, p.1) and, that this relation was mediated by anticipated belongingness. Interestingly, this effect neither could be replicated for when the recruiter was a woman, nor for when the students were male (Hentschel et al., 2021). This suggests that females do not just look for female characteristics in their jobs (or at least in job advertisements) but that they also make their application intentions dependent on their communal needs (sense of belonging) and that they are more influenced by stereotypes than male.

Additional evidence for this thought is provided by van der Nat (2019), who found an increase in application intentions for community-oriented characterized job advertisements and a decrease for agentic job advertisements in females. Further, Born and Taris (2010) discovered that when gender-stereotypical adjectives in job advertisements were replaced with verbs, that is, having the job requirements outlined as actions instead of personality characteristics, there was no preference of women for the female outlined advertisement – thereby highlighting the complexity of the influence of wordings in employment ads. However, it remains to be answered why women favor female-stereotypical job ads when they are based on adjectives. We suspect an underlying influence of sexism.

The Role of Sexist Attitudes in Women

Sexism postulates traditional gender roles and considers one gender (usually males) to be more dominant, successful and better than the other (usually females). Further, it ascribes certain characteristics to the different genders (e.g. females are more emotional than males; Masequesmay, 2021). Glick and Fiske (1996) emphasize the ambivalence of sexism and introduce the concepts of hostile and benevolent sexism. Hostile sexism is termed within the negatively prejudiced thinking of a gender (e.g., believing that women are incapable). Specifically, it can be linked to biased stereotypical behavior and hostility against women, and is based on patriarchal beliefs (Hack, n.d.). Moreover, it endorses traditional gender roles and considers women as underdeveloped and dependent; it is associated with sexual harassment and violence (Hack, n.d.). Benevolent sexism, in contrast, is the positively prejudiced thinking of gender. Women are stereotyped as being nurturing, sensitive, and in need of protection. Even though women may benefit from prosocial behavior, this exact behavior could put them in a dependent and menial position (Good, n.d.). Moreover, being positively stereotyped does not necessarily have to evoke pleasant feelings. Referring to someone as a 'pretty' or 'sweet' co-worker, might decrease the feeling of authority and competence for that person in the workplace (Glick & Fiske, 1996). Thus, both benevolent and hostile sexism are developed on the belief that women are helpless and under the heel of men and should not be seen as a constructive force in a working setting.

Protective paternalism is one of the three subcomponents of benevolent sexism and takes the view that women should be guarded, protected and provided for by men (Glick & Fiske, 1996), along with complementary gender differentiation (i.e., men and women differ in their gender-specific characteristics but these differences are complementary to each other) and heterosexual intimacy (i.e., men and women are sexually dependent). King et al. (2010) examined the association between benevolent sexism and work experiences and found that male evaluators who score high on benevolent sexism, thinking that women are in need of

protection, tend to allocate more complex work tasks more often to male managers than to female managers, thereby taking their chance to master challenging situations. They further postulate, that this may be, at least to some extent, the reason why women are underrepresented in leading positions. Consequently, stereotyping themselves as ‘in need of protection’ might keep women from getting important (masculine) work experiences they need to be confident enough to apply for certain job positions. Moreover, this leads to assume that females scoring high on benevolent sexism would be more likely to apply for female-worded job advertisements, as they may feel that these would match their experiences better. Thus, it seems that not all women are influenced by gender stereotypes, but perhaps only women who are more sexist themselves.

Further, a study conducted by Kulich et al. (2020) revealed that higher benevolent sexism rates in females had a negative effect on their leading intentions. However, at the same time, when men were exposed to women scoring high on benevolent sexism, their leading intention increased. These results provide confirmatory evidence that benevolent sexism in women influences leadership preferences in both women and men. Moreover, these results might give rise to assume why the gender gap in leading positions still exists. Accordingly, traditional gender roles in the workplace could be supported by feminine benevolent sexists who subordinate themselves to male leadership, thus handing an opportunity to gain leading experiences to the male gender on a silver platter. However, it remains to be answered whether benevolent sexism also influences application intentions in women for job positions that are not necessarily about leadership positions. In general, women “characterize themselves in more stereotypic terms – as less assertive and less competent in leadership – than they characterized others in their gender group” (Hentschel et al., 2019, p.1). Moreover, females tend to adapt their self-concept to the stereotypicality of their environment: when exposed to benevolent sexism, females categorize themselves predominantly in relational

schemas than in task-oriented schemas (Barreto et al., 2009). Thus, we expect that women scoring higher on sexism would prefer to apply for female-worded job advertisements, as these do not just match their self-stereotyped nature, but also their leading preferences.

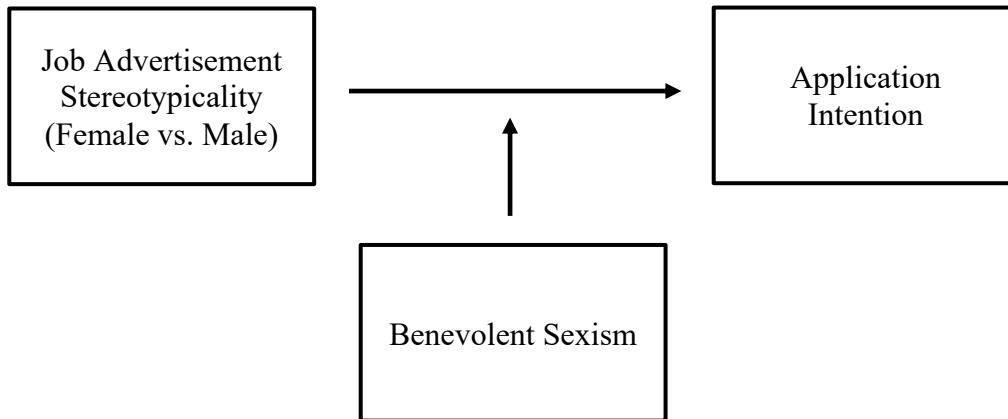
The current study

As far as we know, no research has yet investigated the application preferences of women as a function of the extent to which they have sexist attitudes. Understanding the link between sexism and application intentions will help to clarify what keeps women from applying for certain jobs, even when they are qualified for them. As previously mentioned, measurements that assure career and job possibilities for women, like the female quota stipulations, may not have a lot of impact, as long as many women are not willing to apply for these jobs anyway. As such, necessary measures to assure women can achieve certain job positions could include programs that build confidence in women, or sexism awareness programs, rather than more job offers for women in certain domains.

This study examines the potential role of sexism rates in females in the context of application intentions. More specifically, we aim to find out to what extent benevolent sexism predicts the intention to apply for more female or male stereotypically-worded job advertisements in females. We hypothesize that among women, the influence of female versus male stereotypical job descriptions on application intention is moderated by benevolent sexism. The proposed research model is displayed in the figure below (Figure 1). We expect females who score higher on benevolent sexism to prefer to apply for female stereotypically-worded job advertisements than for male stereotypically-worded job advertisements. This expectation is based on the reasoning that we believe this group of women to be more gender-conforming and thus find their abilities, experiences and interests better reflected in the female rather than in the male stereotypically worded job profile.

Figure 1

The Moderating Role of Benevolent Sexism on the Relationship Between Female versus Male Stereotypically-Written Job Advertisements and Application Intentions in Females



On the other hand, we expect that women who score lower on benevolent sexism would be less influenced by gender-stereotypical wording in the job advertisement. Consequently, they are expected to be less likely to apply for female stereotypically-worded job advertisements than for male stereotypically-worded job advertisements. This prediction is based on the outlined literature, which assumes, that only women who are more sexist themselves are influenced by gender stereotypes. Thus, leading to the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1. Female participants scoring high on benevolent sexism will be more likely to intend to apply for a female rather than male stereotypically-worded job advertisement.

Hypothesis 2. Female participants scoring low on benevolent sexism will not be more likely to intend to apply for a female rather than a male stereotypically-worded job advertisement.

Methods

Participants and Design

This study was conducted in collaboration with other students and their research projects. Particularly for this study, and in line with the research question, we focused on the data collection and analysis of the female participants. A power analysis conducted with G*Power prior to the study indicated a sample size of 128 participants to be required in order to receive a power of .80 and a medium effect size (Cohen's $d = .25$). In total, 213 female participants started the online study¹. One hundred and thirty-seven participants enrolled at the University of Groningen (UG) were recruited online through Sona Systems, and obtained course credits in exchange for participation. The remaining 76 participants were recruited through different social media channels like Instagram, LinkedIn, Facebook or WhatsApp. We also created a flyer containing a QR code link to our study, which we distributed in the library of the UG. Participants recruited from either the social media platforms or the flyer were not rewarded for participation.

Sixty-four participants were excluded from further participation because they did not match the primary inclusion criteria preregistered beforehand ([see this link](#)). Three were rejected because they picked "other" when asked about their gender, six participants were rejected from our analysis because they reported that they were not Bachelor or Master students, and a further seven students, obtained from the social media platforms and the flyer, were rejected because they reported studying Psychology, and therefore were assumed to have too much psychological knowledge to be truly unbiased in their responses to the questionnaires. This was not true for participants recruited via Sona Systems, as these were exclusively first-year Psychology students, who we did not expect to have too much insight into the psychological field yet. Moreover, 38 participants did not finish the study, from which we excluded 34 from our analysis because they finished less than half of the items of

¹ Note: Given the deadlines for the Bachelor thesis, the data analysis was performed before data collection of the entire research project was finished.

the dependent measures. Another 11 participants were excluded from the analysis because they did not read the job advertisement for more than 10 seconds, and three participants were excluded because they failed two or more of the attention-check questions. Thus, the final sample consisted of 149 female students (124 Sona students, and 25 social media students), from which the majority, 92 participants (61.74%), were between 19 to 21 years of age, 19 participants (12.75%) reported being between 16 to 18 years of age, 30 participants (20.13%) were between 22 to 24 years of age, six participants (4.03%) were aged between 25 to 27 years, and two participants (1.34%) indicated that their age is somewhere between 28 to 30 years.

Participation was voluntary, and participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions of a single factor experiment in which stereotypicality of the job description was manipulated (female stereotypic versus male stereotypic). Benevolent sexism was included as a moderating variable, and application intention as a dependent variable. Ethics approval was obtained from the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural and Social Sciences (EC-BBS) of the University of Groningen prior to undertaking the investigation.

Procedure

After receiving a link either through the Sona platform or the social media posts, participants were navigated to the Qualtrics questionnaire. Here, participants read that the purpose of the study was to “examine the expectations that students have about an internship and the company when they are presented with an advertisement about the internship”, and that the information gained from this research would be used to refine job advertisements. Moreover, participants were informed about what they could expect from the study, what the consequences of participation are, and how their data will be treated. Afterwards, participants were affirmed confidentiality, and they provided informed consent.

The questionnaire began with four forced-choice questions that asked the participants about their demographics. In particular, the participants were asked to report their gender (“male”, “female”, or “other”), indicate their age range (“under 16”, “16-18”, “19-21”, “22-24”, “25-27”, “28-30”, or “above 30”), state whether they are “currently studying to obtain a master or bachelor degree” (“yes” or “no”), and to state whether they are Psychology students (“yes” or “no”).

As a next step, participants were informed about that the researchers of the project are collaborating with an organization from Amsterdam (“MediaAtWork”), which wants to gain more insight into the attractiveness of their job advertisement for a practicum they offer. Moreover, participants were told that they would be introduced to this particular job advertisement right after, and then they would be asked to report their feelings and thoughts about the advertisement, their application intentions, and their expectations and evaluations regarding the organization.

Thus, in the next step of the study, we exposed the participants to the *manipulation of job stereotypicality*. Participants were randomly assigned to either read the male or the female stereotypically-written job advertisement (job advertisements see Appendix A). Female and male stereotypical written job advertisements differed in the wording that was used to describe the qualifications needed for the applicant to manage the internship, as well as in the wording that described the tasks comprising the internship. For example, the heading of the female stereotypically-written job advertisement asked: “Are You Our New Empathic and Socially Skilled Project Management Intern?”, whereas for the male stereotypically-written job advertisement the heading was formulated like: “Are You Our New Strategic and Career-minded Project Management Intern?”. Apart from that, the two job advertisements were equal in color, structure and information. Also, both job advertisements advertised the same job

position (i.e., project management intern). This manipulation was checked with two measures at the end of the questionnaire.

After reading the assigned job advertisement, the participants completed a short questionnaire regarding color (“I like the choice of colors that was used in the job advertisement.”), structure (“The structure of the job advertisement makes sense considering the information that is presented.”) and information density (“The job advertisement provides me with all the information that I need for writing an application letter.”) of the job advertisement they were exposed to. For this, a 5-point Likert scale (Kutscher, 2021; Wulf, 2019) ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) was used. The purpose of this short questionnaire was solely to support the credibility of the cover story and the job advertisements we created.

Then, the dependent measures were taken², after which the manipulation was checked, and benevolent sexism was measured. Benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996) was hypothesized to moderate the influence of job stereotypicality on application intention. However, we measured it at the end in order to avoid priming out participants with the topic of sexism. All measures used a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Further, we included three attention checks in our questionnaire where the participants had to select a predetermined answer option: (1) “Please click Strongly agree (attention check).”, (2) “Please click Somewhat disagree (attention check).”, and (3) “Please click Somewhat agree (attention check).”.

As the last step of the study, participants were debriefed and thanked for participation. They received insight into the aim of the study, were informed about the fictionality of the organization and job advertisements, and about the purpose of the attention check questions.

² Note: This thesis is part of a larger research project which also includes measures that were not relevant to this hypothesis. While the focus of this paper lies on benevolent sexism, other measures addressed emotions, meta-stereotypes, power and self-esteem.

Measures

Manipulation Check

In order to test whether our operationalization clearly manipulated the dependent variable, a manipulation check was included. For that, participants were asked about the extent to which they perceived the advertisement they were exposed to as more stereotypically male or female (i.e., “I think the job description is...”). Additionally, they were asked to what extent they thought the company and the employees are stereotypically male or female (i.e., “I think the company and the people working in it are...”). For both questions the stereotypicality was rated on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (*stereotypically male*) to 5 (*stereotypically female*). We averaged the items to create a scale of perceived stereotypicality of the job descriptions ($M = 2.68$, $SD = 2.99$; $r = .47$, $p < .001$). Lower scores indicate more perceived male stereotypicality, and higher scores indicate more perceived female stereotypicality.

Dependent Measure: Application Intentions

The dependent variable was assessed by measuring the participant's application intentions for the internship. More specifically, participants were asked to what extent they agree with the following statements, using a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*): “I can imagine sending an E-mail to MediaAtWork and ask for more information about their internship program.” ($M = 2.89$, $SD = 1.35$); “If I saw an internship like this in an advertisement, I would consider applying for it.” ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.33$); and “I would actively look for an internship like the one described.” ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 1.25$). These items have been used to measure application intentions in similar studies (Kutscher, 2021; Wulf, 2019), and gained a good internal consistency for this study as well ($\alpha = .86$). Therefore, the items were combined into a scale for application intention ($M = 2.70$, $SD = 1.15$), and higher scores indicated higher intentions to apply.

Moderating Variable: Benevolent Sexism

The final measure of the study concerned the moderator variable of our research: benevolent sexism (Glick & Fiske, 1996). To assess the benevolent sexism rates in the participants, a 5-point Likert scale (Glick & Fiske, 1996) ranging from 1 (*strongly agree*) to 5 (*strongly disagree*) was used and participants were asked to indicate their agreement with the following six statements: “Many women have a quality that few men possess.” ($M = 2.84, SD = 1.16$); “Women should be cherished and protected by men.” ($M = 2.56, SD = 1.52$); “Every man ought to have a woman whom he adores.” ($M = 2.03, SD = 1.18$); “Men are incomplete without women.” ($M = 1.95, SD = 1.31$); “Women, compared to men, tend to have a superior moral sensibility.” ($M = 2.97, SD = 1.95$); and “Men should be willing to sacrifice their own well-being in order to provide financially for the women in their lives.” ($M = 1.35, SD = 0.70$). We averaged all the items to create a scale of benevolent sexism (Cronbach’s $\alpha = .77$; $M = 2.84, SD = 0.76$). Higher scores represent higher sexism rates.

Results**Manipulation Check**

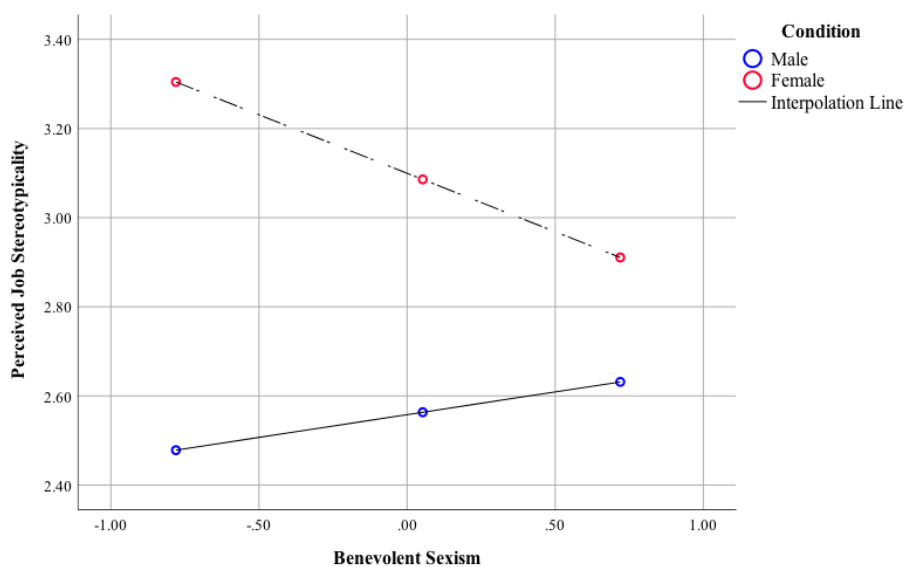
In line with our research design, a single factor experiment in which stereotypicality of the job description was manipulated (female stereotypic versus male stereotypic), we conducted a one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) on the dependent variable (i.e., perceived job stereotypicality) to test whether our manipulation was effective. Specifically, when testing the effect of condition (i.e., being exposed to either the female stereotypically-written job advertisement or the male stereotypically-written job advertisement) on perceived job stereotypicality, we found a significant main effect $F(1, 147) = 21.86, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .129$. Participants who were assigned to the masculine condition reported lower levels of perceived job stereotypicality ($M = 2.56, SD = 0.67$) than those who had been assigned to the feminine condition ($M = 3.11, SD = 0.75$). This means that on average, participants who were assigned

to the male stereotypically-worded job advertisement rated it more stereotypically male than female, and participants who had been assigned to the female stereotypically-worded job advertisement rated it as more stereotypically female than male.

Benevolent sexism (centered) was not significantly associated with perceived job stereotypicality, $F(1, 147) = 1.47, p = .102, \eta_p^2 = .195$. However, we found a significant interaction effect between benevolent sexism and condition (i.e., job stereotypicality) on perceived job stereotypicality, $F(1, 145) = 6.12, p = .015$. Simple effects analyses revealed a main effect of job stereotypicality for participants who scored low on benevolent sexism, as they perceived the job description as more female stereotypic in the female condition than in the male stereotypic condition, $\beta = 0.83, t(145) = 5.08, p < .001, 95\% CI [0.50, 1.15]$. This effect was not found for participants who scored high on benevolent sexism, $\beta = 0.28, t(145) = 1.79, p = .076, 95\% CI [-0.03, 0.59]$. These findings are displayed in Figure 2.

Figure 2

The Moderating Role of Different Benevolent Sexism Levels (High versus Low) on Perceived Job Advertisement Stereotypicality by Condition (Male versus Female)



Thus, the manipulation was only successful for participants who scored lower on benevolent sexism, but not for those who scored higher on benevolent sexism.

Hypothesis Testing

Before testing our hypothesis, we first examined by means of one-way ANOVA whether the manipulation (i.e., being exposed to either the female stereotypically-written job advertisement or to the male stereotypically-written job advertisement) influenced application intentions. Results revealed a non-significant effect of condition on participant's application intentions, $F(1, 147) = 0.27, p = .606, \eta_p^2 = .002$. Accordingly, participants in the female condition ($M = 2.75, SD = 1.20$) did not have significantly higher application intentions than those in the male condition ($M = 2.65, SD = 1.11$). Moreover, our analysis revealed a non-significant association between benevolent sexism (centered) and participants' application intention $F(1, 127) = 0.98, p = .491$. Thus, neither condition nor benevolent sexism predict application intentions in the participants.

Next, to test our specific hypotheses (firstly, female participants scoring high on benevolent sexism will be more likely to intend to apply for a female rather than male stereotypically-worded job advertisement, and secondly, female participants scoring low on benevolent sexism will not be more likely to intend to apply for a female rather than a male stereotypically-worded job advertisement), we used Model 1 from Process (Hayes, 2021) to examine whether benevolent sexism (centered) moderated the effect of job stereotypicality on application intention, and more specifically, whether participants scoring either low or high on benevolent sexism are influenced differently by the manipulation of job stereotypicality. The interaction effect was not significant, $F(1, 145) = 1.04, p = .311, \eta_p^2 = .007$.

However, as we had a specific hypothesis for participants scoring low and one for participants scoring high on benevolent sexism on application intention, we examined the simple effects: For participants scoring low on benevolent sexism on application intention, we

did not find a significant effect of job stereotypicality, $\beta = -0.90$, $t(145) = -0.33$, $p = .738$, 95% $CI [-0.62, 0.44]$, which is in line with hypothesis 2. Thus, participants who scored low on benevolent sexism indeed were not more likely to intend to apply for a female rather than a male stereotypically-worded job advertisement. However, we also did not find a significant effect of job stereotypicality for participants scoring high on benevolent sexism on application intention, $\beta = 0.28$, $t(145) = 1.09$, $p = .276$, 95% $CI [-0.23, 0.79]$, which does not support hypothesis 1. Accordingly, female participants scoring high on benevolent sexism were not more likely to intend to apply for a female rather than a male stereotypically-worded job advertisement as well. Given this body of evidence, we could only find support for hypothesis 2, but as this is a prediction of no difference, it should be interpreted with caution.

Discussion

The purpose of this research was to examine how much the extent to which women are sexist influences the extent to which gender stereotypes in job advertisements influence their application intentions. More specifically, we hypothesized that women scoring high on benevolent sexism will be more likely to intend to apply for a female rather than a male stereotypically-worded job advertisement, while women scoring low on benevolent sexism will not be influenced by gender-stereotypical wording in a job advertisement. These expectations were based on previous research, which found that the particular wording of job advertisements (feminine versus masculine) influences the application intentions in females, with them preferring to apply for female stereotypically-worded job advertisements (Gaucher et al., 2011; Hentschel et al., 2021; Kutscher, 2021; Wulf, 2019). However, given that women tend to adapt their self-concept to the gender-stereotypicality of their environment (Barreto et al., 2009), it is likely that the female stereotypically-written job advertisement could have an influence specifically on women scoring high on sexism. That is, given that they see themselves as stereotypical females, they should be more likely to consider to apply for the

female-stereotypically written job advertisement, as such a job matches their self-stereotyped nature.

However, our results revealed no difference in the application intention between women who have been exposed to the male stereotypically-worded job advertisement and those who have been exposed to the female stereotypically-worded job advertisement. Moreover, benevolent sexism did not play a role either. That is, more sexist women were not more likely to intend to apply for the female rather than the male stereotypically-worded job advertisement, and neither were less sexist women. We did predict this for low sexist women (hypothesis 2), but we expected to find a difference for high sexist women (hypothesis 1), which we did not find.

An exploratory analysis revealed that women who scored low on benevolent sexism perceived the female stereotypically-worded job descriptions to be more stereotypical for women than the male stereotypically-worded job descriptions, while those scoring high on benevolent sexism did not. Thus, less sexist women seem to be more aware of gender stereotypical wording in job descriptions than more sexist women.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The findings of the current study should be interpreted in the context of the existing literature. First, we did not find an effect for job stereotypicality on application intention. This outcome is contrary to previous research, which found an effect for job stereotypicality on application intention (Kutscher, 2021; Wulf, 2019). More specifically, Wulf (2019) found an increase in application intention in females for female stereotypically-worded job advertisements and explains this finding by the means of positive meta-stereotypes, which she assumes to increase self-confidence in the applicants. However, the findings of the current study do not support those of previous research. One explanation for this is provided by Born and Taris (2010), who found that application intentions in females for female stereotypically-

worded job advertisements diminish when the gender-stereotypical adjectives, which describe the job qualifications, were outlined as verbs instead, that is, as actions. Thus, our null-findings could be attributed to the way we chose to present the gender-stereotypicality in our job advertisements. Accordingly, significant effects for job stereotypicality on application would have been obtained if the job qualifications were described as behaviors and not as personality characteristics. However, this is just one possible explanation for these null-findings. Previous research found significant effects for job stereotypicality on application intention (Kutscher, 2021; Wulf, 2019), even though they used adjectives to create gender-stereotypicality in their job advertisements. Hence, it cannot explain why we did not replicate the previous research. However, based on the combination of our results and the pre-existing literature, we advise organizations to outline job advertisements behaviourally-oriented, if they aim for female applicants. Further, this could be considered as the first step towards the reduction of the gender gap in high-ranking positions and other male-dominated job fields.

Second, our manipulation worked. This study confirms that being exposed to either the female or the male stereotypically-worded job advertisement influences perceived job-stereotypicality. Thus, gender-stereotypic wording in job advertisements influenced the extent to which we view them as stereotypically female or male. These results align with those of previous research which has found an effect for job-stereotypicality on perceived job-stereotypicality as well (Kutscher, 2021; Wulf, 2019). Thus, people are aware of stereotypes in job advertisements, even though it did not influence application intentions in our research. Hence, a failed manipulation cannot explain why no effects were found on application intentions.

However, it remains to be answered why women apply less for male stereotypically-worded job advertisements (Gaucher et al., 2011; Hentschel et al., 2021; Kutscher, 2021; Wulf, 2019), especially because these usually advertise higher-order positions (Spitzer et al.,

2018), and therefore they might be an influential source that reinforces the gender gap. Stereotypically, most women hold community-oriented traits (Larsen et al., 2017), and most male stereotypically-job advertisements are outlined instrumentally (Hentschel et al., 2021; Gaucher et al., 2011). Thus, women might refuse to apply for higher-order positions or for male stereotypically-worded job advertisements, because these do not match their communal nature and needs. However, we recommend further study on this topic. Another explanation is given by Hentschel et al. (2021), who found that overall feelings of belongingness and winning an application process decrease in women when they are exposed to male stereotypically-outlined job ads. Therefore, women may be hesitant to apply for higher-order positions, because after reading (male-stereotypic) job advertisements, they may not feel like they match these job positions, and they do not expect themselves to stand out above other applicants. However, in order to counteract the gender gap, we encourage women to apply for the jobs, even if they feel that they do not have a chance anyway.

Lastly, we have not found evidence for the predicted moderation, but we found that women scoring low on benevolent sexism to see more perceived job stereotypicality in line with the manipulation. Thus, less sexist women are more aware of gender stereotypical wording in job advertisements than more sexist women. This accords with earlier observations, which showed that people scoring high on sexism are not as prone as people scoring low on sexism to recognize gender-stereotypical behavior (Swim et al., 2004). Moreover, this may be explained by the fact that sexist individuals often miss to identify sexist behaviors accordingly (Swim et al., 2004). Therefore, less sexist women may be more aware of gender stereotypical wording in job advertisements, because they are able to identify these gender stereotypical wordings as female versus male stereotypes. However, the question is what such awareness of gender stereotypic job advertisements means in terms of job

application intentions: would they apply anyway even if they do not fit the stereotype, or would they be more to be influenced by it. Future research might undertake this relationship.

Limitations and Future Directions

The findings of this study should be considered in the light of some limitations. Firstly, the majority of our participants were first-year Psychology students. It could be argued that no influence of the job description on application intention was found because students simply did not want to apply for an internship yet. In this regard, students may have been busy passing their courses and were trying to not get overwhelmed with all the impressions that a student life offers. Some students may already be working next to their studies, and accordingly do not have the capacity for another occupation, even though the starting date of the internship program was stated to be flexible in the job advertisements. In future investigations, it therefore may be necessary to test for occupational needs in the participants. With that, participants who already have a job or those who are not actively looking for a job could be ruled out beforehand. As a consequence, the effect of job description stereotypicality on application intention may become clearer. In everyday life, people do not casually look for a particular job or an internship, but because they may, if they are in need of a job and plan to apply for one, if the job advertisement looks appealing to them. By reducing the sample to participants who are thinking about doing an internship already, effects might not just become significant for application intention, but may also be more applicable to the general population. Therefore, this adjustment would positively add to the external validity of the study and could give further insights into the relationship between job description stereotypicality and application intention.

Another limitation is that the questionnaire included a self-esteem scale that was administered as a pre-measure. According to the self-affirmation theory by Steele (1988), people are encouraged to maintain self-integrity. Being exposed to the self-esteem scale

provided the participants with an opportunity to reaffirm themselves. Consequently, when confronted with the job advertisements, they may have been less likely to be negatively affected by job descriptions that are stereotypical: participants' application intentions might have been less influenced after being exposed to the job descriptions because they were reaffirming themselves after becoming aware of their self-esteem level. Therefore, they answered the following questions in an 'I am' state, rather than in a state that was influenced by the stereotypes of the job advertisements. Thus, due to the pre-measure of self-esteem, participants may have become less sensitive to the influence of job stereotypicality. A solution here would be to measure self-esteem at a later point in time.

Thirdly, benevolent sexism was one of the last measurements of this study. Moreover, the questionnaire for this study was slightly longer than those of similar studies (Kutscher, 2021; Wulf, 2019). Participants may have been careless with their responses towards the end of the questionnaire because of various pre- and post-measurements. Future research should consider replicating this study as an independent research project without any other variables included, other than those relevant to the research hypotheses. However, it is also important to mention here that benevolent sexism was measured on a scale originated 1996. This scale may be outdated. Sexists characteristics nowadays, and especially in younger generations, may be expressed differently than it is described in these measurement items. Moreover, sexism today might be defined differently than 26 years ago. What originated from the feminism movement, and was conceptualized to bring awareness to the discrimination against the female gender, is nowadays also a matter of discrimination against other genders (e.g., intersex gender) and sexualities (Masequesmay, 2021). Therefore, scales constructed to measure sexism, like the one used in this study, should be adjusted to the modern conceptualizations of gender. For example, it might be necessary to adjust the scale to today's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer (LGBTQ) standards. When asking female

LGBTQ participants for the extent of their agreement with a benevolent sexism item that states, “Every man ought to have a woman he adores.” (Glick & Fiske, 1996, p. 10), they might find themselves strongly disagreeing not because they are less sexist, but because this statement does not match their romantic interests. This may also explain our non-significant findings for high benevolent sexism. However, given the diverse nature of gender, sexuality and romantic orientations, we recommend future research to use a more modern measurement scale to assess benevolent sexism rates in the participants.

Conclusion

This study provides important contributions to the literature by further investigating the relationship between job description stereotypicality and application intention. Moreover, it suggests that this relationship could be influenced by benevolent sexism levels of the applicants. However, our findings did not support the proposed moderation model. Further, we could not replicate effects previous research has found, which may be partly explained by the limitations of our study. However, even though females scoring high on benevolent sexism did not turn out to prefer applying for the female rather than the male stereotypical job advertisement, we found that females low on benevolent sexism noticed stereotypes in these job advertisements more. This may provide an interesting venue for further research. Based on this, we advise organizations to be thoughtful about gender-stereotypical wording in job advertisements. In conclusion, we hope that we have extended the understanding of possible factors involved in the maintenance of the gender gap in male-dominated job fields.

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University of Groningen.

Appendix

Figure A1

Female Stereotypically-Written Job Advertisement

ARE YOU OUR NEW EMPATHIC AND SOCIALLY SKILLED PROJECT MANAGEMENT INTERN?

Who are we?

MediaAtWork is a company specialized in assisting several organizations all over the world with their online-media representation. Our clients include ministries and municipalities, as well as companies, such as L'Oreal, Volkswagen, and Apple. The departments in MediaAtWork are specialized in different processes related to perfect online advertisement. This involves research, IT, creativity and design, customer contact, and organizational management. During the internship, you have the unique chance to be part of each of these departments.

Who are you?

You are currently enrolled in or finished a Bachelor or Master degree in any given topic. You are motivated to learn and open to new experiences. You are empathic, responsible, and you have very strong social skills. You are able to communicate well with the other interns, our employees, as well as with our (often international) clients. The internship thus requires you to be a socially-minded team-worker and to relate easily to others in a fast-developing international work environment.

What will be your tasks?

You will support our employees in working on different media-related projects in the different departments and present your work at the end of your internship. You will work on online campaigns in a diverse team and for clients from all parts of the world. For this, as well as for the development and understanding our new online media campaigns, you need very good social and communication skills, a high level of empathy, and a sense of responsibility. Depending on your interests and expertise, you can choose what you would like to focus on.

What do we offer?

We offer a paid internship (450€/month). Being a highly interconnected company, an internship at MediaAtWork gives you the opportunity to meet and connect to interesting people from all over the world. Once a month we organize team-building events, because a good atmosphere in the team is important for our company to excel. We put great emphasis on excellent training of our interns. Successfully completing the internship program may give you the chance to work with our company in future - either in our office or any other of our locations all around the world. The internship program is planned for a duration of 6 weeks.

How to apply?

Interested? If you are the empathic and socially skilled intern we are looking for, do not hesitate to send your application documents (motivation letter, diplomas, CV, testimonials) to projectmanagement.intern@work.eu before 01st April, 2022. The internship is planned to start on June 01, 2022 - but the starting date is flexible between June and September due to different academic calendars. We are looking forward to hearing from you!

Corona-Note: As we do not know how the pandemic will develop within the course of this year, we are considering a hybrid or online alternative of the internship if necessary! However, it is our aim to make it as engaging as possible in order for you to gain a realistic experience during your time with us!

MEDIA AT WORK

Figure A2*Male Stereotypically-Written Job Advertisement*

ARE YOU OUR NEW STRATEGIC AND CAREER-MINDED PROJECT MANAGEMENT INTERN?

Who are we?

MediaAtWork is a company specialized in assisting several organizations all over the world with their online-media representation. Our clients include ministries and municipalities, as well as companies, such as L'Oreal, Volkswagen, and Apple. The departments in MediaAtWork are specialized in different processes related to perfect online advertisement. This involves research, IT, creativity and design, customer contact, and organizational management. During the internship, you have the unique chance to be part of each of these departments.

Who are you?

You are currently enrolled in or finished a Bachelor or Master degree in any given topic. You are motivated to learn and open to new experiences. You are strategic, willing to take risks, have strong analytical thinking skills, and you are career-minded. The internship requires you to be resistant to stress, and to be able to compete in a fast-developing international environment.

What will be your tasks?

You will support our employees in working on different media-related projects in the different departments and present your work at the end of your internship. You will work on online campaigns in a diverse team and for clients from all parts of the world. We will need you to be able to be resistant to stress in an ever-changing work environment, work independently even within a team, and also have a strong sense for analytic and strategic thinking as the work is interconnected with the different departments and locations of the company. Depending on your interests and expertise, you can choose what you would like to focus on

What do we offer?

We offer a paid internship (450€/month). Being a highly interconnected company, an internship at MediaAtWork gives you the opportunity to meet and connect to interesting people from all over the world. Once a month we organize team-building events, because a good atmosphere in the team is important for our company to excel. We put great emphasis on excellent training of our interns. Successfully completing the internship program may give you the chance to work with our company in future - either in our office or any other of our locations all around the world. The internship program is planned for a duration of 6 weeks.

How to apply?

Interested? If you are the strategic and career-minded intern we are looking for, do not hesitate to send your application documents (motivation letter, diplomas, CV, testimonials) to projectmanagement.intern@work.eu before 01st April, 2022. The internship is planned to start on June 01, 2022 - but the starting date is flexible between June and September due to different academic calendars. We are looking forward to hearing from you!

Corona-Note: As we do not know how the pandemic will develop within the course of this year, we are considering a hybrid or online alternative of the internship if necessary! However, it is our aim to make it as engaging as possible in order for you to gain a realistic experience during your time with us!



MEDIA AT WORK