



Article

Reverse Sexism and Its Impact on Job Satisfaction and Career Planning: Italian Validation of the “Belief in Sexism Shift Scale”

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Abstract: The belief that men are the new victims of sexism and anti-male bias is gaining traction globally. The concept of reverse sexism, called the belief in sexism shift, is a new and particularly insidious form of contemporary anti-female sexism that combines the prejudice of hostile sexism with the subtlety of modern sexism. Facilitating the cross-cultural study of a rising form of sexism, in this paper, we provide an Italian translation of the BSS and examine its psychometric properties. In Study 1, we confirmed that the Italian BSS scale has the same uni-dimensional factor structure as the English version. In Study 2, we established that the Italian BSS scale measures the same construct among women and men. In Study 3, we found that the Italian BSS scale was a better predictor, compared to other measures of sexism, of numerous perceived career constraints. Subsequently, explorative analyses revealed that BSS escalated the effect of perceived career constraints on perceived job satisfaction and development opportunities among women and men. Together, our results suggest that BSS is a prevalent form of sexism in Italy that has the potential to negatively affect women and men.

Keywords: belief in sexism shift; reverse sexism; psychometric properties; validation



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1. Introduction

In recent decades, society experienced a cultural shift towards increased egalitarian values reflecting changing attitudes towards gender roles. In this context, Italy, with its familistic and traditional culture, regarding the social role of women, is one of the most interesting examples to be addressed and examined (Lomazzi 2017). In several EU Member States, the perceptions related to gender stereotypes affect people’s education, recreation, and life in general, especially, but not exclusively, for younger people (Aidos 2022).

The literature on the topic suggests that the issue of gender discrimination is cultural and not normative, since, on a formal level, women, in Italy and elsewhere, are on equal footing with men (Donà 2010). The glass ceiling, however, is not yet broken, and gender equality is far from being a reality in many situations. Indeed, sexist stereotypes persist in the spheres of politics, family, work, education, and the media, directly and indirectly affecting cognitive and behavioural aspects of society (Moscatelli et al. 2021; Moya Morales and Garófano 2021).

Although the 21st century witnesses a progressive trend towards achieving gender equality, it is also common to see a regressive cultural trend (Moscatelli et al. 2021). In progressive terms, the rise in the educational levels of the population and the increase in female participation in the labour market and politics have significantly contributed to the shift towards more egalitarian gender values, but also to changes in the social representation of “correct roles” for men and women (Brooks and Bolzendahl 2004). In a regressive sense, however, there is also a widespread and massive sexualisation of girls

and women in Italy. Most contemporary Western societies are actually exposed daily to a substantial number of messages that sexualise and objectify women, through all major media (Pacilli et al. 2016; Starr and Ferguson 2012).

Exposure to these messages has important consequences: in relation to women, it can lead them to develop a kind of internalised sexualisation, which can lead them to believe that being sexually attractive to men is a fundamental component of the female gender role and identity (Bigler et al. 2019). Negative consequences are also recorded for men: indeed, in a study in which the subjects played a video game with a sexualised female character compared to a non-sexualised one (Driesmans et al. 2015), adolescent boys and girls expressed greater tolerance of rape myths and sexual harassment after playing with a sexualised female character compared to a non-sexualised one; and men, rejected in a dating game, reported a greater likelihood of attacking a woman when she was wearing sexualised clothing, rather than non-sexualised clothing (Blake et al. 2018). Internalised sexualisation can also lead women to withdraw help and complaints after experiencing violence (Pacilli et al. 2016) or sexual harassment in the workplace (Gramazio et al. 2021).

The issue of inequality between men and women is certainly not resolved, and no country is fully equal, as indicated by the rankings published annually by the [World Economic Forum \(2022\)](#), which measures the gender gap at the global level in over one hundred states. This explains the importance of vigorously pursuing activities to promote the inclusion and participation of women, especially considering the impact that sexist and gender stereotypes have on individuals and their health and lives.

Moreover, in recent times, the belief that men are the new victims of sexism and anti-male bias is gaining traction. In the U.S., men have filed anti-discrimination lawsuits against prominent business companies, such as Yahoo (Lee 2016), Google (Payton et al. 2018), and AT&T (Brooks 2022), as well as renowned academic institutions, such as Yale University (Bauer-Wolf 2018) and Stanford University (Elsesser 2022). In Italy, to the best of our knowledge, anti-discrimination lawsuits with men as the complainants have not yet been filed. However, on some major social networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, men have started to complain about being the victims of gender discrimination. These provide a vivid testimony of men's complaints about being harassed by women, and their feeling discriminated against on a more general basis, as well as men's resentment of women and their societal progress.

Similarly, data from opinion polls suggest that, across the globe, a small but significant proportion of people believe that, today, women have more opportunities than men. Concretely, this belief is held by 15 percent of men and 9 percent of women in the U.S., and 11 percent of men and 10 percent of women in Italy (Gallup, and International Labor Organization 2017). Data from research also suggests that, in particular, men believe that, in recent years, anti-male discrimination has increased and has started to exceed anti-female discrimination (Kehn and Ruthig 2013). The perception of discrimination against men was also observed in the Eurofound survey (ECWS 2015). Specifically, in the 2015 Survey, 0.7 per cent of men reported having experienced gender discrimination in the 12 months prior to the survey (compared to 3.1 per cent of women). Notably, the numbers of men reporting anti-male discrimination has increased over time. In Italy, for example, from 2010 to 2015 the percentage increased from 0.2 to 0.7 per cent, in Hungary from 0.1 to 3.0 per cent, in the Netherlands from 1.0 to 2.9 per cent, and, in the 28 European countries participating in the survey, the general data reports an increase from 0.7 to 1.1 per cent (ECWS 2015).

In Europe (ECWS 2015), men's perception of being discriminated against usually arises in professional fields with strong proportions of female employees (e.g., human health and social work activities; real estate activities). But men's perception of being discriminated against arises mainly in contexts of affirmative action, such as the introduction of gender quotas in recruitment and promotions.

Taken together, the above-described phenomena constitute the Belief in Sexism Shift (BSS)—the belief that “the tables have turned” and sexism has shifted target from women to men (Zehnter et al. 2021). In their work, Zehnter et al. (2021) were the first to systematically define BSS and developed an English scale to measure it: the BSS scale. The aim of this paper is to provide a robust translation and validation of the BSS scale from English to Italian. As beliefs about male victimhood may present a non-negligible obstacle on the way to greater gender equality and produce unprecedented negative consequences, it seems warranted to investigate this phenomenon across culture.

1.1. *Belief in Sexism Shift—A Definition*

The main characteristic of belief in sexism shift is the victimisation of men (Zehnter et al. 2021). Those who endorse BSS perceive that sexism against men has increased to the extent that it now exceeds sexism against women. Thereby, men are not seen as additional victims of traditional and rigid gender norms alongside women (Manzi 2019), but as the primary victims of sexism.

Moreover, men are not only seen as victims of gender discrimination in contexts where they may actually be at a disadvantage (e.g., in female-dominated professions or traditionally feminine roles; (Manzi 2019)). Instead, BSS entails that anti-male discrimination is pervasive and manifests itself in a wide range of settings (e.g., the workplace, politics), through a wide range of perpetrators (e.g., the media, feminists), and in many different ways (e.g., political correctness, devaluation of masculinity (Zehnter et al. 2021)).

Finally, BSS entails that anti-male discrimination is the result of women’s societal advancement (Zehnter et al. 2021). Those who endorse BSS do not see women’s progress as advantageous to women and men, but perceive women’s gains as disadvantageous to men (Bosson et al. 2012; Ruthig et al. 2017; Wilkins et al. 2017). Thus, BSS includes a zero-sum perspective on gender discrimination, differentiating individuals who endorse BSS from those who perceive that all genders may suffer from some form of discrimination (Heilman and Wallen 2010; Moss-Racusin et al. 2010).

1.2. *Belief in Sexism Shift as a Contemporary Manifestation of Anti-Female Sexism*

Although ostensibly focused on men, belief in sexism shift (BSS) appears to be a contemporary manifestation of anti-female sexism. Zehnter et al. (2021) argue that BSS adheres to both the definition and function of sexism.

Broadly, sexism is composed of prejudicial and discriminatory attitudes, beliefs, and practices that target a person, or group of people, based on their sex and/or gender (American Psychological Association 2018). Unlike any other form of sexism, BSS conceals anti-female attitudes and beliefs behind a narrative of male victimisation (Zehnter et al. 2021). In BSS, men are framed as the victims of a system that relentlessly favours women. This implies that women’s progress is the result of favouritism, rather than ability and merit.

As with all forms of anti-female sexism, BSS functions to maintain a gender hierarchy that places men over women (Jetten et al. 2013; Zehnter et al. 2021). BSS redirects attention from pressing women’s issues towards men as the victims of a system turned against them. However, BSS does not only obscure discrimination and bias against women. Taking it one step further, BSS uses the narrative of male victimhood to provide an unprecedented rationale for prioritising men’s rights over women’s rights (Zehnter et al. 2021).

Although BSS fulfils the criteria for anti-female sexism, it differs markedly from other forms of anti-female sexism, such as traditional, ambivalent, and modern sexism (for an overview, see Zehnter et al. 2021), as well as from ambivalent beliefs about men.

1.3. *BSS in Relation to Traditional and Modern Sexism*

In previous research, BSS was more strongly related to modern sexism than traditional sexism (Zehnter et al. 2021). Traditional or old-fashioned sexism is concerned with rigid social roles ascribed to women and men (Spence et al. 1973; Swim et al. 1995): While men are deemed responsible for intellectual and leadership roles, women are restrained

to housekeeping and caregiving roles. Modern sexism does not ascribe such rigid roles to women, but rather entails beliefs about the current state of gender discrimination. Specifically, modern sexism is the denial of ongoing discrimination against women (Swim et al. 1995). BSS, too, presents as a comment on the state of gender discrimination. However, modern sexism posits that Western societies have overcome gender discrimination against women, rendering additional initiatives to promote women obsolete. In contrast, BSS assumes that gender discrimination is an ongoing societal problem, albeit with men as the new victims. Thus, those endorsing BSS may see additional measures to achieving gender equality as warranted—as long as they promote men and not women.

1.4. BSS in Relation to Hostile and Benevolent Sexism

BSS had a strong association with hostile sexism, and only a moderate association with benevolent sexism (Zehnter et al. 2021). Hostile sexism entails negative views (e.g., controlling, overly sensitive) of non-traditional and feminist women; benevolent sexism entails positive views (e.g., pure, protection-worthy) of traditional women (Glick and Fiske 1996). BSS does not target any particular subgroup of women—all women are presumed to gain from anti-male discrimination. Importantly, the strong association between BSS and hostile sexism highlights the profound anti-female prejudice that is part of BSS. However, BSS is much more subtle than hostile sexism and conceals that prejudice behind a narrative of male victimhood. Consequently, it may be harder to recognise BSS as prejudicial against women, rather than hostile sexism, making BSS a more insidious type of contemporary sexism. Accordingly, the more men were inclined to respond in socially acceptable ways, the less they endorsed hostile sexism. Contrastingly, BSS was endorsed without regard for social acceptability (Zehnter et al. 2021).

1.5. BSS in Relation to Ambivalence towards Men

Research has not yet tested the relationship between BSS and ambivalence towards men. Unlike different manifestations of anti-female sexism (traditional, modern, hostile, and benevolent), ambivalence towards men is, as the name suggests, concerned with negative and positive attitudes towards men (Glick and Fiske 1999); thus, it shares BSS's focus on men. However, unlike BSS, ambivalence towards men does not conceal negative attitudes towards women behind its preoccupation with men. Moreover, while BSS paints men as victims of gender discrimination, those who hold ambivalent views towards men tend to acknowledge men's overall higher social status—although they may resent it (Glick and Fiske 1999). Consequently, BSS, as with all other forms of anti-female sexism, tends to be endorsed to a greater extent by men than by women (Zehnter et al. 2021), while ambivalence towards men is endorsed to a greater extent by women than by men (Glick and Fiske 1999).

1.6. Present Research

As outlined above, BSS is a new and particularly insidious form of contemporary anti-female sexism that combines the prejudice of hostile sexism with the subtlety of modern sexism. As a rising form of anti-female sexism (Kehn and Ruthig 2013; Ryan and Zehnter 2022), the further study of BSS, its psychological underpinnings, and its downstream consequences are important.

International survey data suggests that BSS is endorsed in many European countries, including Italy (Gallup, and International Labor Organization 2017). To study BSS beyond the English-speaking context, robust and validated versions of the BSS scale in multiple languages are essential. In this research, we generated an Italian version of the BSS-scale and examined its psychometric properties.

In Study 1, we translated the BSS-scale from English to Italian. Then, we confirmed a Confirmatory Factor Analysis to test its factor structure. Examining discriminant validity, we also examined the associations of BSS with traditional sexism, modern sexism, hostile sexism, and benevolent sexism, as well as hostility and benevolence against men. In Study 2, we used analysis of measurement invariance to test whether the Italian BSS scale measures the same construct among women and men. In Study 3, we tested the predictive validity of the Italian BSS scale as compared to other measures of sexism. Specifically, we explored whether BSS was a unique predictor of a variety of perceived career constraints, such as gender discrimination, ambitions to pursue a non-traditional career, and perceived constraints attributed to economic crises. In addition, we explored whether BSS would escalate the effect of perceived career constraints on perceived career development opportunities and job satisfaction.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1. Study 1

As the first step of this research, the aim of Study 1 was to translate the original English version of the Belief in Sexism Shift scale (BSS) into Italian and to evaluate its psychometric properties in a sample of Italians.

2.2. Participants and Procedure

Statistical power analyses were used to derive the sample size for Study 1. Building on the research describing the construction of the scale (Zehnter et al. 2021), and the suggestions from Perugini et al. (2018), as well as the Cohen (1988) guidelines, we used $r = 0.20$, a significant level of 0.05, and a power of 0.95. These analyses suggested a minimum sample size of 314 participants.

Given that this was a minimum sample size requirement and greater sample sizes are preferential in psychometric research, we enrolled a sample of 687 participants. Of the participants, 269 (39%) identified as men, 403 (59%) as women, and 15 (2%) as non-binary. The age of participants ranged between 19 and 79 ($M_{age} = 29.28$, $SD = 8.83$). In regards to profession, 37.5 per cent worked in the educational sector, 32.9 per cent in public administration, and 29.6% in STEM (science, technology, engineering, and math). The participants were recruited through convenience sampling via posting the survey link on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Furthermore, we sent the survey link to acquaintances via email. Participation was voluntary. The study was carried out in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and the protocol was authorised by the Internal Ethics Committee of the Department of Education Sciences (Psychology Section) of the University of Catania (Ierb-Edunict-2020/4). The relevant research procedures followed all the guidelines of the AIP (Italian Psychology Association) and its Ethics Council.

For the validation and adaptation procedure for the Italian context, Beaton et al.'s (2000) guidelines were followed. Therefore, the procedure consisted of several steps: the first was the translation and adaptation of the original scale from English to Italian; this was followed by other steps in which re-translation and the presence and activity of a revision committee were included. Later, the Italian version was translated by a bilingual (Italian-English) expert. As no substantial differences were found between the final Italian version and the original English version, the scale was used in the research protocol together with the other instruments. As suggested by Zehnter et al. (2021), the items were administered in a randomised order. The order of the other sexism scales presented to the participants was randomised too. Table 1 shows a list of the items in the original version, and shows these translated into Italian.

Table 1. Original and Italian items with their means and standard deviations.

Original Scale	M(SD)	Italian Scale	M(SD)
BSS1 In the US, discrimination against men is on the rise.	3.13 (1.9)	In Italia la discriminazione nei confronti degli uomini è in aumento.	2.83 (1.5)
BSS2 Giving women more rights often requires taking away men’s rights.	2.43 (1.7)	Dare più diritti alle donne spesso richiede di togliere diritti agli uomini.	1.97 (1.3)
BSS3 Nowadays, men don’t have the same chances in the job market as women.	2.44 (1.7)	Oggi gli uomini non hanno le stesse possibilità delle donne nel mercato del lavoro.	3.10 (1.6)
BSS4 All in all, men have more responsibilities and fewer benefits.	2.95 (1.9)	Nel complesso, gli uomini hanno più responsabilità e meno vantaggi.	2.87 (1.4)
BSS5 Feminism does not discriminate against men. *	3.54 (2.5)	Il femminismo non discrimina gli uomini.	3.32 (1.9)
BSS6 Men are not particularly discriminated against. *	3.14 (1.8)	Gli uomini non sono particolarmente discriminate.	3.41 (1.8)
BSS7 Under the guise of equality for women, men are actually being discriminated against.	2.94 (1.9)	Con la scusa dell’uguaglianza per le donne, gli uomini vengono in realtà discriminate.	2.92 (1.5)
BSS8 In today’s society, men are often punished for acting manly.	3.09 (1.9)	Nella società odierna, gli uomini sono spesso puniti per essersi comportati da uomini.	2.40 (1.6)
BSS9 While women can use the “gender-card” to get ahead, men can’t.	3.66 (2.1)	Mentre le donne possono usare la “carta dell’essere donne” per andare avanti, gli uomini non possono.	3.35 (1.8)
BSS10 If anything, men are more discriminated against than women these days.	2.55 (1.8)	Semmai, oggi gli uomini sono più discriminati delle donne.	2.27 (1.3)
BSS11 In today’s society, women can say things that men are not allowed to say.	3.66 (2)	Nella società di oggi, le donne possono dire cose che agli uomini non sono permesse.	3.33 (1.8)
BSS12 All in all, men are well respected in today’s society. *	2.66 (1.5)	Nel complesso, gli uomini sono ben rispettati nella società di oggi.	2.84 (1.4)
BSS13 Feminism is about favoring women over men.	3.12 (2.1)	Il femminismo consiste nel favorire le donne rispetto agli uomini.	2.79 (1.6)
BSS14 In the pursuit of women’s rights, the government has neglected men’s rights.	2.89 (1.9)	Nel perseguire i diritti delle donne, il governo ha trascurato i diritti degli uomini.	2.43 (1.5)
BSS15 It is evident that the media is biased against men.	3.02 (1.9)	È evidente che i media sono prevenuti nei confronti degli uomini.	2.95 (1.8)

Note = * these items are reversed; the acronym BSS refers to the Belief in Sexism Shift scale and the number beside it refers to the corresponding item.

2.3. Measures

2.3.1. Belief in Sexism Shift Scale—BSS

For the measurement of the construct of Belief in Sexism Shift, the newly developed Italian version of the Belief in Sexism Shift scale was used. As in the English version (Zehnter et al. 2021), the scale consists of 15 items and is answered by the participants on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = I strongly disagree; 7 = I strongly agree). As described above, the BSS scale measures a subtle form of contemporary female anti-sexism that, unlike previous forms of sexism, masks negative attitudes towards women through a narrative of male victimhood.

2.3.2. The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory—ASI

The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory—ASI (Glick and Fiske 1996; Manganelli et al. 2008)—is a self-report scale that consists of two subscales designed to assess benevolent sexism and hostile sexism towards women. Per subscale, research participants indicate their agreement with 11 items on a 6-point Likert scale (0 = I strongly disagree; 5 = I strongly agree). Specifically, the subscale “Benevolent Sexism towards Women” measures a chivalrous attitude towards women, that is, the perception of women as morally refined,

but fragile creatures who are in need of male protection. The subscale “Hostile Sexism towards Women”, on the other hand, measures an antagonistic attitude towards women, who are seen as manipulative and eager to subvert the natural order between women and men through seduction. Cronbach’s Alpha is 0.84 for the subscale Hostile Sexism towards Women, and 0.79 for the subscale Benevolent Sexism towards Women.

2.3.3. The Ambivalence towards Men Inventory—AMI

The Ambivalence towards Men Inventory—AMI (Glick and Fiske 1999; Manganelli et al. 2008) is a self-report scale that assesses benevolent and hostile sexism towards men using 10 items per subscale and a 6-point Likert scale (0 = I strongly disagree; 5 = I strongly agree). The first subscale, “Benevolence against Men”, measures a positive attitude towards men, who are seen as champions of the weakest, but, at the same time, as creatures in need of women’s care. The second subscale, “Hostility against Men”, measures an antagonistic attitude towards men, who are portrayed as controlling women through power and violence. Cronbach’s Alpha is 0.77 for the subscale Hostility against Men, and 0.81 for the subscale Benevolence against Men.

2.3.4. Old-Fashioned Sexism Scale

The Old-Fashioned Sexism scale (Swim et al. 1995) measures the construct of traditional or “old-fashioned” sexism with 5 items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = I strongly disagree; 5 = I strongly agree). The scale measures endorsement of traditional and rigid gender roles, attributing intellectual and leadership roles to men, and household labour and caring roles to women. Cronbach’s Alpha is 0.72.

2.3.5. Modern Sexism Scale

The Modern Sexism Scale (Swim et al. 1995) measures denial of structural discrimination against women with 8 items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = I strongly disagree; 5 = I strongly agree). Although modern sexism does not explicitly devalue women, the denial of women’s discrimination allows those who endorse it to implicitly attribute women’s social stagnation to their own faults. Cronbach’s Alpha is 0.81.

2.4. Data Analysis

To confirm the factorial structure of the BSS in the Italian sample, both an exploratory factor analysis and a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were carried out. Structural equation models (SEM) (Bagozzi 1994) were used to test the model, completed through AMOS 26.0, applying the maximum likelihood (ML) method.

To evaluate the model’s goodness of fit, we used several indices: the Tucker Lewis Index (TLI), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), the GFI (Goodness Fit Index), and the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR).

Traditionally, an omnibus cut-off point of 0.90 has been recommended for the GFI index (Shevlin and Miles 1998). RMSEA in the range of 0.05 to 0.10 was considered an indication of fair fit (MacCallum et al. 1996), however, more recently, a cut-off value close to 0.06 (Hu and Bentler 1999) or a stringent upper limit of 0.07 (Steiger 2007) seems to be the general consensus. Values for CFI range between 0 and 1, with Bentler and Bonett (1980) recommending values greater than 0.90 indicating a good fit. More recent suggestions state that the cut-off criteria should be $TLI \geq 0.95$ (Hu and Bentler 1999). A cut-off criterion of $CFI \geq 0.90$ was initially proposed; however, other studies have shown that a value of $CFI \geq 0.95$ is presently recognised as indicative of good fit (Hu and Bentler 1999; Hooper et al. 2008). Values for the SRMR range from zero to 1.0, with well-fitting models obtaining values less than 0.05 (Byrne 1998; Diamantopoulos et al. 2000). An SRMR of 0 indicates perfect fit.

Furthermore, we tested reliability through Cronbach’s Alpha coefficient (Raykov 1998), in addition to the measurement of convergent validity, average variance extracted (AVE),

construct reliability (CR), and discriminant validity. The AVE should have values > 0.50 (Fornell and Larcker 1981) and CR values > 0.60 (Bagozzi and Yi 1988).

To optimise the sample size, missing values for the relevant items were estimated using the Expectation Maximization method. None of the items had more than 5 percent missing values, indicating that this option was appropriate for use (Tabachnick and Fidell 2007). Other well-known analytical tools such as correlations were also used, which were implemented by using SPSS 27.0.

3. Results

3.1. Exploratory Factor Analysis

An exploratory factor analysis was carried out to analyse the factorial structure of the BSS scale in the Italian sample. To compute this, we randomly divided the sample into two similar subsamples (Sample 1 = 340 participants; Sample 2 = 347 participants), according to the suggestion by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). For this analysis, we used Sample 1.

In line with the results and analyses performed for the original scale, factorial analysis with the principal component method (PCA) indicated a single-factor structure as most appropriate in the Italian sample. More specifically, Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($\chi^2(105) = 5066.9$ $p < 0.001$) and the Kaiser Meyer-Olkin test (KMO = 0.948) showed a good adequacy of data sampling. These results thus suggested an excellent congruence of the data with the sample and were consistent with the results from the original sample and scale.

3.2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

In CFA, using a one-factor model of BSS, the following values emerged as indices of model fit: $\chi^2(86) = 230.392$, SRMR = 0.03, RMSEA = 0.056, CFI = 0.966, TLI = 0.959. Furthermore, all factor loadings were significant at $p < 0.001$ and ranged between 0.53 and 0.85. These results show excellent model fit in the Italian sample, which even exceeded the model fit reported in the original sample and scale.

Table 2 shows the factor loadings of all items from the Italian BSS scale and compares them to those of the original English BSS scale. All factors' loadings were significant at $p < 0.001$. Moreover, the normality of the distribution is showed in Table 3, indicating the skewness and kurtosis values. The results support the goodness of the scale and the normality of the distribution, due to acceptable skewness and kurtosis values. Actually, critical values that exceed +2.00, or that are smaller than -2.00 , indicate statistically significant degrees of non-normality.

Table 2. Factor loading of the original and Italian items.

	Factor Loading Original Scale	Factor Loading Italian Scale
BSS1	0.87	0.80
BSS2	0.75	0.82
BSS3	0.77	0.53
BSS4	0.83	0.78
BSS5	0.74	0.72
BSS6	0.68	0.62
BSS7	0.92	0.85
BSS8	0.83	0.77
BSS9	0.79	0.75
BSS10	0.91	0.83
BSS11	0.68	0.79
BSS12	0.61	0.62
BSS13	0.83	0.64
BSS14	0.87	0.82
BSS15	0.87	0.76

Table 3. Skewness and kurtosis values of the Italian items.

	Skewness	Kurtosis
BSS1	0.614	−0.564
BSS2	1.709	1.106
BSS3	1.120	0.403
BSS4	1.313	0.811
BSS5	0.476	−1.125
BSS6	0.351	−0.929
BSS7	1.057	0.279
BSS8	1.017	0.309
BSS9	0.970	−.354
BSS10	1.633	1.994
BSS11	0.709	−0.914
BSS12	0.737	0.134
BSS13	1.500	1.178
BSS14	1.529	1.434
BSS15	0.806	−0.544

3.3. Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Cronbach’s Alpha was computed to test reliability, and it showed good internal consistency of the scale: BHSs 0.92. For the measurement of convergent validity, we computed the average variance extracted (AVE) and the construct reliability (CR). For the scale BSS, the AVE = 0.55 and CR = 0.92. Based on the suggestions of [Fornell and Larcker \(1981\)](#) (AVE > 0.50) and [Bagozzi and Yi \(1988\)](#) (CR > 0.60), the BSS scale showed an acceptable convergent validity for the Italian sample.

To test discriminant validity, we used the indications from [McKenny et al. \(2013\)](#), who asserted that “Evidence of discriminant validity exists if other constructs do not correlate strongly enough with the construct of interest to suggest that they measure the same construct” (p. 156). To test this, we performed correlation tests between the BSS scale and other scales that measure sexism: i.e., modern sexism, old-fashioned sexism, and ambivalent and benevolent sexism. The results are showed in [Table 4](#).

Table 4. Reliability, composite reliability, average variance extracted, and intercorrelations (N = 687).

		α	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Belief in sexism shift (BSS)	0.92	0.92	0.55	1						
2	Hostile sexism (ASI)	0.84	0.86	0.51	0.71 **	1					
3	Benevolent sexism (ASI)	0.79	0.85	0.50	0.28 **	0.44 *	1				
4	Hostility against men (AMI)	0.77	0.86	0.52	−0.59 **	−0.25 **	−0.44 **	1			
5	Benevolence against men (AMI)	0.81	0.85	0.51	0.64 **	0.71 **	0.64 **	−0.29 **	1		
6	Old-fashioned sexism	0.72	0.76	0.51	0.40 **	0.39 **	0.26 **	−0.13 **	0.43 **	1	
7	Modern sexism	0.81	0.79	0.54	0.23 **	0.59 **	0.19 **	−0.12 **	0.54 **	0.35 **	1

Note: scores: ** < 0.001, * < 0.01

The BSS scale had significant and positive correlations with all the scales considered, and, except for hostile sexism towards women ($r = 0.71$ $p < 0.001$), the other correlations were not excessively strong, demonstrating that the scale holds discriminate validity as it measures the construct of sexism, but in a different way than the other scales in the literature.

4. Study 2

Considering the gender-sensitive content of the BSS scale, we followed [Zehnter et al.’s \(2021\)](#) example and assessed whether the Italian BSS scale also measures the same construct among women and men. Thereto, we first conducted an independent-sample t-test to examine gender differences in BSS. Then, we carried out analysis of measurement invariance ([Millsap 2012](#); [Putnick and Bornstein 2016](#)).

4.1. Participants

For the present study, we selected 538 participants from Study 1 who identified as men or women. The age of participants ranged between 19 and 79 ($M_{\text{age}} = 30.25$, $SD = 8.8$).

4.2. Data Analysis

SPSS (version 27.0 for Windows; IBM Corp., Armonk, NY, USA) was used for the descriptive analysis of the variables in this study. Furthermore, an independent-sample t-test was used to test gender differences.

AMOS (version 27.0) and Structural Equation Model (SEM) was used for the analysis of measurement invariance. A series of multiple-group CFA, with women and men as subgroups, were carried out to measure configural invariance, metric invariance (Horn and McArdle 1992), measurement error invariance (Mullen 1995; Singh 1995; Meredith 1993), and scalar invariance (Steenkamp and Baumgartner 1998).

Through progressively more stringent forms of measurement equivalence, (Cheung and Lau 2008; Vandenberg and Lance 2000), we established whether factor loadings, intercepts, and residual variances were equivalent in a single factor of BSS. If this is the case, any mean differences in BSS based on gender reflect real mean differences in the latent construct (Van de Schoot et al. 2012, p. 3; Byrne et al. 1989; Campbell et al. 2008).

To evaluate the models' goodness of fit, we used the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA), and the Standardised Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR).

Additionally, χ^2 values and $\Delta\chi^2$ values were used and presented between the competing models, and the index ΔCFI was used with values not exceeding 0.01, indicating the equivalence of models in terms of fit (Meade et al. 2008).

5. Results

5.1. Independent-Sample t-Test

As the first step, we examined gender differences for all items of the BSS scale. The results (shown in Table 5) revealed that men, on average, had higher scores than women in almost all items. The items with no statistically significant gender differences were Items 3, 5, 6, and 12.

Table 5. Independent-sample t-test and means of women and men for the items of BSS (N = 538).

	Women M (SD)	Men M (SD)	t	p
BSS1	2.24 (1.3)	3.43 (1.7)	8.62	<0.001
BSS2	1.54 (1.1)	2.32 (1.5)	7.31	<0.001
BSS3	2.93 (1.6)	3.27 (1.6)	1.93	0.171
BSS4	2.55 (0.9)	3.14 (1.8)	6.67	<0.001
BSS5	2.58 (1.9)	4.11 (1.9)	9.53	0.275
BSS6	3.0 (1.7)	3.70 (1.8)	4.52	0.16
BSS7	2.71 (1.2)	3.13 (1.8)	5.56	<0.001
BSS8	1.91 (1.4)	2.91 (1.7)	8.07	<0.001
BSS9	2.92 (1.6)	3.63 (2)	7.58	<0.001
BSS10	1.97 (1)	2.43 (1.6)	8.13	<0.001
BSS11	2.81 (1.6)	3.76 (2.0)	6.21	<0.001
BSS12	2.42 (1.3)	3.11 (1.5)	5.82	0.236
BSS13	2.51 (1.2)	2.81 (1.9)	8.66	<0.001
BSS14	2.22 (1.1)	2.62 (1.8)	5.12	<0.001
BSS15	2.50 (1.6)	3.21 (1.9)	7.02	<0.001

5.2. Multiple-Group Confirmatory Factor Analysis (MCEFA) for Gender

According to Steyn and De Bruin (2020), differences in the results between groups (men vs. women) may depend on substantial differences in the latent construct between groups, or may result from biased measurements (p. 2).

For testing the model of configural invariance, we performed the first multiple-group analysis, evaluating, simultaneously, the fit for the subsamples of men and women. For this first model, the fit indices were [$\chi^2(172) = 335.566$; $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.95; SRMR = 0.039; RMSEA = 0.042]. These results suggest a good fit for this model, and support the notion that a one-factor model of BSS is a good fit among men and women (Table 6). The configural model was used as a baseline for all following equivalence models (Byrne 2008).

Table 6. Fit statistics for measurement invariance by gender (N = 538).

Model	χ^2 (df)	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA	Δ CFI
1. Configural Invariance	335.566 (172)	0.949	0.039	0.042 (0.035–0.049)	-
2. Metric Invariance	382.434 (186)	0.939	0.046	0.044 (0.038–0.051)	0.01
3. Scalar Invariance	452.787 (201)	0.89	0.079	0.06 (0.055–0.066)	0.04
4. Partial Scalar Invariance	397.436 (198)	0.933	0.081	0.054 (0.041–0.053)	0.01
5. Measurement Error Invariance	435.882 (211)	0.923	0.0875	0.05 (0.044–0.056)	0.01

For the investigation of the metric invariance, we carried out a new multi-group analysis. The fit indices shown in Table 5 suggested that Model 2 could be considered equivalent to Model 1, since $\Delta\chi^2_{M2-M1}(14) = 46.87$ and Δ CFI = 0.01. Thus, metric invariance was supported. That is, the factor loadings of the BSS items were equivalent among men and women.

To test scalar invariance, we performed two different multiple-group analyses. First, we tested full scalar invariance in Model 3. However, the fit indices ($\chi^2(201) = 452.787$; $p < 0.001$; CFI = 0.89; SRMR = 0.079; RMSEA = 0.06) suggested a poor model fit. Moreover, full scalar invariance was not supported because $\Delta\chi^2_{M3-M2}(15) = 70.35$ and Δ CFI = 0.04 were above the acceptable threshold. For these reasons, following the recommendations from the literature (Byrne et al. 1989; Putnick and Bornstein 2016), we chose to accept some violations of scalar measurement invariance. Concretely, we released some constraints on the intercepts of the BSS items, specifically the intercepts referring to items with reverse scores. For this less restrained Model 4, the fit indices were acceptable ($\Delta\chi^2_{M4-M2}(12) = 15$, and Δ CFI = 0.006), supporting the notion of partial scalar invariance.

Finally, we also tested invariance of measurement error (Model 5, Table 5). The fit indices ($\Delta\chi^2_{M5-M4}(13) = 38.45$, Δ CFI = 0.01) showed acceptable model fit, indicating that measurement error was equivalent among women and men.

6. Study 3

In order to explore the differential impact and role played by the BSS scale, Study 3 is proposed to test the predictive role of each sexism scale (i.e., BSS, hostile sexism, benevolent sexism, modern sexism, old-fashioned sexism, ambivalence towards men) on specific career barriers. Furthermore, considering the impact that BSS may have on some of these career barriers, a moderation model is proposed between these barriers and the constructs of job satisfaction and career development opportunities.

Firstly, we tested whether BSS would predict a variety of career barriers, such as gender discrimination or conflict between work and family, above and beyond other forms of sexism. Then, we tested the intersecting impact of BSS with these career outcomes on job satisfaction and career development opportunities. Specifically, we tested whether BSS would moderate the relationship between these career barriers and the above-mentioned outcomes. Figure 1 is provided for the explanation of the theoretical model.

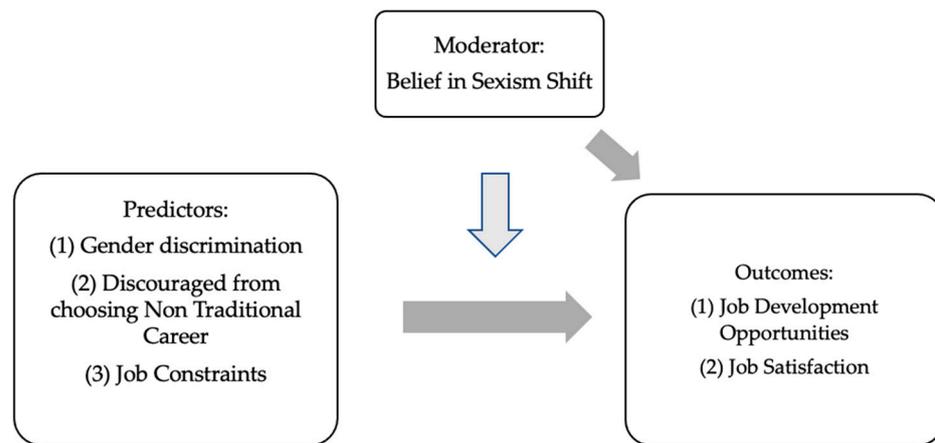


Figure 1. Theoretical model.

6.1. Participants

Study 3 enrolled a total of 263 participants (144 men, 55%; 119 women, 45%). The age of participants ranged between 20 and 62 ($M_{age} = 35.91$, $SD = 10.97$). Moreover, 31.6 per cent of the participants worked in public administration, 13.9 percent in the healthcare sector, 39.5 percent in the educational sector, and 15 percent were self-employed. With reference to the educational level, 40.5 percent of the participants had completed 13 years of schooling, whereas the remaining 59.5 per cent had completed a minimum of 16 years of schooling.

Participants were recruited through convenience sampling, using an online survey. We posted a survey link on social media platforms, such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and we sent the survey link to acquaintances via email. Clicking on the link, participants received an information sheet and an informed consent form which, once accepted, led to the survey, with instructions on how to complete it. Participation was voluntary.

6.2. Measures

In this study, we used all the previous and above-mentioned scales for the measurement of sexism (the Belief in Sexism Shift—BSS—scale, the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory—ASI, the Ambivalence towards Men Inventory—AMI, the Old-Fashioned Sexism scale, and the Modern Sexism scale). For the specific purposes of this study, we also added measurements of perceived career barriers, job opportunities, and job satisfaction.

6.2.1. Career Barriers Inventory-Revised (CBI-S)

Career Barriers Inventory-Revised (CBI-S (Swanson et al. 1996)): this instrument is useful for the assessment of individuals' perceptions of possible barriers that they may experience during their career, and which may therefore hinder or interfere with their career choices and professional development (Swanson and Tokar 1991). This assessment tool covers a wide range of perceived barriers, related to both personal and contextual factors (Swanson et al. 1996; Annovazzi et al. 2018). The CBI-Revised consists of 70 items distributed over 13 different subscales, all assessed on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = Would not hinder my professional projects at all; 7 = Would completely hinder my professional projects). Specifically, the 13 subscales assess: (1) gender discrimination; (2) lack of self-esteem; (3) multi-role conflict linked to the difficulty of managing occupational demands with the roles of parent, partner, etc.; (4) conflict between work and family demands (closely related to children); (5) ethnic discrimination; (6) the perception of not being adequately and sufficiently prepared for work demands; (7) disapproval from significant others; (8) difficulty in making decisions (decision-making process); (9) dissatisfaction related to one's career; (10) tendency to be discouraged by the idea of taking up occupations that are not traditional for one's gender; (11) difficulty related to health problems and/or physical and intellectual disabilities; (12) difficulty in the labour market or the perception of

barriers related to the economic crisis; (13) difficulty in social relations related to the world of work, or the perception of barriers related to work adaptation and possible socialisation problems in the work context.

6.2.2. Job Development Opportunities Scale

The three-item subscale adopted by the Job Demand-Resource Questionnaire (JD-RQ, Bakker and Demerouti 2014) was used to measure the level of development opportunities of employees. An example is: "In my job, I have the opportunity to develop my strengths" (1 = "Strongly disagree" and 5 = "Completely agree").

6.2.3. Job Satisfaction Survey

Job satisfaction was measured with the Italian version of the Job Satisfaction Scale by Platania et al. (2021). The scale consists of 36 items, and each participant could respond to the items by indicating their level of agreement on a 6-point Likert scale (1 = I strongly disagree; 6 = I strongly agree) (Caponnetto et al. 2022).

6.3. Data Analysis

Data were analysed using SPSS 27.0, and Amos 26.0. SPSS 27.0 was used to clean and filter the data and conduct the descriptive analysis, whereas AMOS 26.0 was used to perform a series of path analysis. In addition, for the estimation of the moderating effect, we used model 3 of the Hayes PROCESS macro for SPSS (Hayes 2013). The process involved using a bias-corrected bootstrapping of 5000 bootstrap samples with a 95% confidence interval. The bootstrap test is considered significant at 0.05 if there is no zero within the upper and lower confidence intervals (CI).

6.4. Results

6.4.1. Path Analysis of the Different Sexism Scales on Career Barriers

For the measurement of the differential impacts of the BSS scale compared to other scales measuring sexism, a series of SEM regression analyses were performed using the statistical software Amos 26.0. The results shown in Table 6 indicate that the BSS construct succeeds in predicting some of the most important career barriers, such as gender discrimination, the tendency to be discouraged by the idea of undertaking non-traditional occupations for one's gender, and difficulty in the labour market or the perception of barriers related to the economic crisis above and beyond other forms of sexism. Note that the findings summarised in Table 7 show only the significant results that emerged.

Table 7. Regression weights.

	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	Sig.
Gender Discrimination ← BSS	0.248	0.083	3.554	<0.001
Gender Discrimination ← Hostile ASI	0.154	0.077	2.593	0.01
Multiple-Role Conflict ← Hostile ASI	0.121	0.089	3.221	0.01
Racial Discrimination ← BSS	0.241	0.082	2.584	0.003
Discouraged From Choosing Non-Traditional Career ← BSS	0.20	0.079	1.887	0.01
Job Market Constraints ← BSS	0.281	0.085	2.986	0.002
Difficulties With Socialisation ← Modern Sexism	0.119	0.069	1.923	0.3

Note: BSS= Belief in Sexism Shift, Hostile ASI = Ambivalent Sexism Inventory.

6.4.2. The Moderation Model

For estimating the moderation effect, Hayes' PROCESS macro model 1 for SPSS (Hayes 2013) was used.

As suggested by Cohen et al. (2013), the moderation model was proposed and described in three steps. In the first step, the effect of the independent variables, that is, the career barriers (gender discrimination, non-traditional career, and job constraints) on the dependent variables (job satisfaction and job development opportunities) was tested. In the second stage, the effect of the moderating variable (BSS) on the dependent variables was tested. Finally, in the third step, the interaction terms (each independent variable \times BSS) and their effects on the dependent variables were introduced. Before calculating the interaction terms, the predictor and moderator variables were centred to minimise multicollinearity between the interactions and their individual components (Aiken et al. 1991). To identify the form of moderation, when significant, the regression model was plotted at two values of the moderator variable, i.e., one standard deviation above the mean and one standard deviation below the mean. The results of the moderation analyses are presented in Table 8.

Table 8. Results of moderation analyses.

	Job Development Opportunities	Job Satisfaction
Step 1	β	β
Gender Discrimination	−0.31 *	−0.20 *
Discouraged from choosing Non-Traditional Career	−0.22 *	−0.28 *
Job Constraints	0.40 *	0.31 *
Step 2		
BSS	−0.28 *	−0.23 *
Step 3		
Gender discrimination X BSS	0.13 *	0.08 *
Discouraged from Choosing Non-Traditional Career X BSS	0.11 *	0.10
Job Constraints X BSS	0.09 *	0.06

Note * $p < 0.01$.

As displayed in Table 8, in Step 1, perceived levels of gender discrimination had a significant and negative impact on perceived job development opportunities ($\beta = -0.31$) and on job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.20$). Similarly, feeling discouraged from choosing a non-traditional career had a significant and negative impact on job development opportunities ($\beta = -0.23$) and on job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.28$), and perceiving job constraints on perceived job development opportunities ($\beta = -0.40$) and on job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.31$). In Step 2, the moderator variable BSS also has a negative and significant impact on perceived job development opportunities ($\beta = -0.28$) and on job satisfaction ($\beta = -0.23$).

Regarding the moderating effects in the relationship between the different career barriers and the construct of BSS, results showed several significant interactions effects on perceived job development opportunities. Indeed, endorsing BSS increased the negative effect that each of the perceived career barriers had on perceived job development opportunities. That is, participants who perceived gender discrimination felt discouraged to choose a non-traditional career, and perceived job constraints perceived fewer job development opportunities when their perceptions of male victimhood were high, rather than low.

Furthermore, the interaction Gender Discrimination \times BSS predicted job satisfaction. That is, participants who perceived gender discrimination were less satisfied with their jobs when they perceived high, rather than low, victimisation of men.

To better explain the effect of the moderating variable, Figures 2–5 depict the different significant interactions.

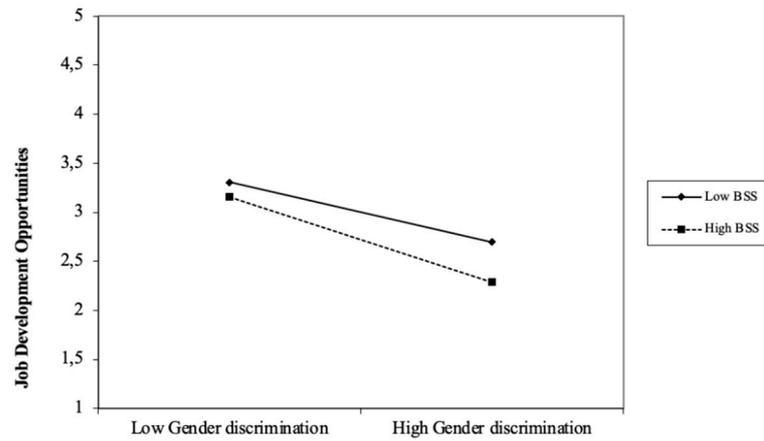


Figure 2. The moderation effect of BSS on the relationship between Gender Discrimination and Job Development Opportunities.

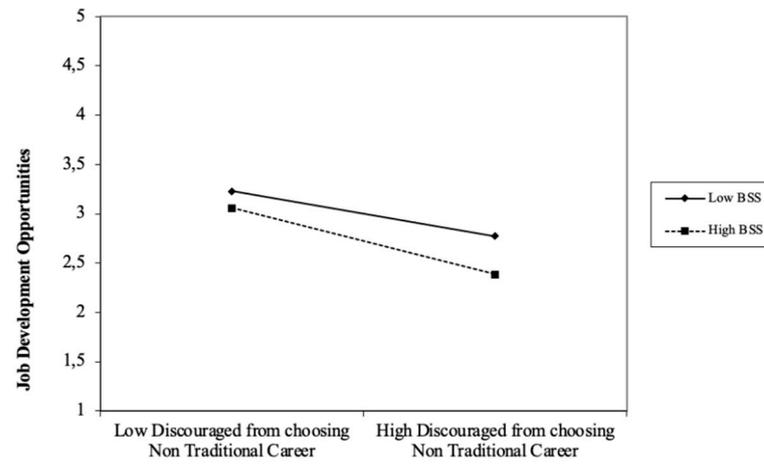


Figure 3. The moderation effect of BSS on the relationship between Discouraged from Choosing Non-Traditional Career and Job Development Opportunities.

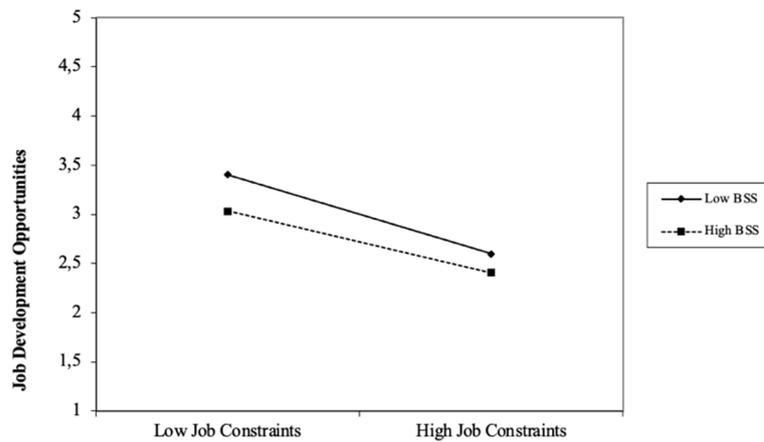


Figure 4. The moderation effect of BSS on the relationship between Job Constraints and Job Development Opportunities.

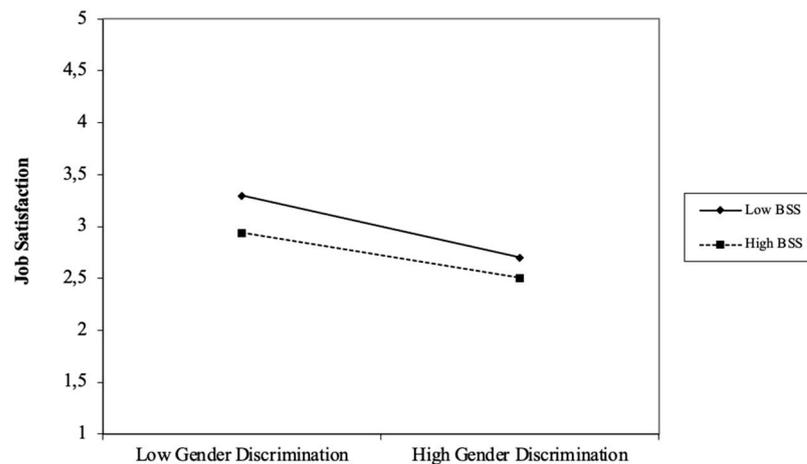


Figure 5. The moderation effect of BSS on the relationship between Gender Discrimination and Job Satisfaction.

Next, we explored whether BSS escalated the negative effects of the examined career barriers on perceived job opportunities and job satisfaction for women as well as men. Thereto, we conducted two separate moderation models for men and women, the results of which are shown in Table 9.

Table 9. Results from moderation analysis run for men and women separately (* $p < 0.001$).

	Job Development Opportunities		Job Satisfaction	
	Men	Women	Men	Women
Step 1	β	β	β	β
Gender Discrimination	-0.24 *	-0.38 *	-0.18 *	-0.22 *
Discouraged from Choosing Non-Traditional Career	-0.17 *	-0.27 *	-0.26 *	-0.30 *
Job Constraints	0.42 *	0.38 *	0.35 *	0.27 *
Step 2				
BSS	-0.31 *	-0.25 *	-0.24 *	-0.21 *
Step 3				
Gender Discrimination X BSS	0.06 *	0.20 *	0.07 *	0.09 *
Discouraged from Choosing Non-Traditional Career X BSS	0.15 *	0.12 *	0.16 *	0.12 *
Job Constraints X BSS	0.13 *	n.s.	n.s.	n.s.

Indeed, gender emerged as a variable that modifies the impact of the results and facilitates a deeper interpretation of the results. In relation to perceived Gender Discrimination and feeling discouraged from choosing Non-Traditional Careers, women suffered and perceived these phenomena more than men. The impact of these career barriers on job satisfaction and job opportunities seemed, therefore, also more acute.

On the contrary, for Job Constraints, the greatest impacts seem to be recorded for the male sample. This would imply that, for the male sample, the experience of job constraints has a stronger and more negative impact on job development opportunities and on job satisfaction than for women.

The most interesting results, however, are related to the interactions of these career barriers with BSS. The Gender Discrimination x BSS interaction effect predicted job opportunities and job satisfaction stronger in the female sample, underlining, again, that the perception of gender discrimination is stronger in women, and that BSS—although concerned with men—escalates the negative effects of these concerns on women’s perceived job opportunities and job satisfaction.

Different results, however, arise in the other two career barriers examined. The interaction effect of feeling discouraged from choosing a Non-Traditional Career \times BSS was significant for women and men for both of the outcomes investigated. In contrast, the interaction effect of Job Constraints \times BSS showed a significant effect for men exclusively, and only for the outcome of Job Development Opportunities.

7. Discussion

The aim of the present research was to study the phenomenon of belief in sexism shift and to provide psychometric evidence for the use of the Belief of Sexism Shift scale in Italy. The results of this study were largely consistent with those of [Zehnter et al. \(2021\)](#), which supports the presence of the phenomenon in the Italian context and the stability and reliability of the Italian scale to measure it. A variety of statistical procedures were applied, confirming in Study 1 the mono-factorial structure of the Italian 15-item scale. Furthermore, the results revealed in Study 2 of the confirmatory multigroup factor analysis showed the same factor solution for men and women, reinforcing that the Italian BSS scale—as with its English counterpart—measures the same construct among men and women. Moreover, the scale showed good internal consistency and discriminant validity.

In greater detail, the BSS scale emerged also in the Italian context as a uni-dimensional construct that measures contemporary sexism in a subtle way. As with the English version, the Italian BSS scale also reflected that male victimisation is perceived in a plurality of ways (e.g., through the devaluation of manhood) by multiple perpetrators (e.g., feminists, the media), and the belief is that this victimisation is a direct consequence of the advancement of women.

As reported in the paper of the original scale development, strong correlations emerged between this new scale and other forms of sexism. In detail, the highest correlation was found with the construct of hostile sexism towards women, suggesting that, for the Italian sample, too, the BSS construct is significantly related to the antagonistic attitude towards women typical of hostile sexism. Innovatively, in this research, we added the measurement of the construct of hostile and benevolent sexism towards men. In line with the empathy for men this entailed, a negative correlation emerged between BSS and hostile sexism towards men, and a positive correlation emerged between BSS and benevolent sexism towards men. That is, greater victimisation of men was associated with a greater positive attitude towards men, who are perceived as the champions of the weakest, and a lower antagonistic attitude towards men. Ultimately, these findings emphasise the gains that men may have from assuming the status of victims.

Another aim in the present study was to analyse the potential consequences of belief in sexism shift above and beyond other forms of sexism in the Italian sample. Thereto, in Study 3, we tested the impact of BSS on a variety of different career barrier outcomes alongside other sexism scales. The results revealed that the BSS scale was the best predictor for some of the most important career barriers, such as gender discrimination, the tendency to be discouraged by the idea of choosing non-traditional employment for one's gender, and difficulties in the labour market or the perception of barriers related to the economic crisis. Based on these results, we also investigated the possible moderating role of BSS in the relationship between these barriers and the constructs of job satisfaction and job development opportunities. These findings indicate that endorsing BSS increases the negative effects of perceiving gender discrimination, feeling discouraged to choose a non-traditional career, and perceiving job constraints due the economic crisis on job satisfaction and performance, and on possible career planning.

Repeating the moderation analyses by gender provided additional insight on the intersecting effects of carrier barriers and BSS on job satisfaction and perceived career opportunities among women and men.

Consistent with the literature on the topic, women experienced lower job satisfaction and fewer opportunities for career development than men, especially when they experience career barriers such as gender discrimination or the choice of non-traditional careers. Gender is indeed recognised as an important factor influencing career development and choice (Zula 2014). Gender discrimination is particularly evident on career development and career counselling, as women especially are continually hindered from entering and advancing in certain high-wage, high-skill professions. This awareness is ascribed to women remaining underrepresented in many fields, using their skills and talents poorly, and consequently being less prone to advance to higher levels in their professions compared to men (Sullivan and Mahalik 2000). As early as 1981, Hackett and Betz (1981) identified the internal and external barriers associated with women's career development, documenting that decision-making and career retention processes are more complex and limited for women than for men.

The most interesting results, however, are those related to the interactions of the perceived career barriers and BSS on job satisfaction and perceived job opportunities. Specifically, the interaction between perceived gender discrimination and BSS predicted job satisfaction and perceived career opportunities more strongly for women than men. This indicates that BSS, although concerned with discrimination against men, further diminishes women's perceived career outcomes. In contrast, the interaction between feeling discouraged from choosing a non-traditional career and BSS had a slightly stronger effect on the job satisfaction and perceived career opportunities among men than women. This finding underlines the impact that perceiving reverse sexism can have on men, in particular, those that pursue non-traditional careers. Consistent with this finding, in the ECWS (2015), men in non-traditional professions reported greater anti-male discrimination than men in traditional professions. Notably though, the interaction between feeling discouraged to choose a non-traditional career and BSS was also a significant predictor of women's job satisfaction and perceived job opportunities. Ultimately, this indicates that BSS may be an important, yet understudied, factor driving gender segregation at work.

Finally, the interaction between perceived job constraints and BSS predicted perceived career opportunities exclusively among men. This result suggests that men who feel victimised by sexism and women's progress are more prone to perceive various constraints in the labour market.

Together, these results underline that the perception of male victimhood has negative consequences for both women and men. Thus, it seems equally important and worthwhile to invest resources in studying and counteracting this phenomenon, also in terms of training and promoting inclusion and diversity. Highlighting the establishment of reverse sexism in the Italian context also contributes to providing important information on the possible articulation and targets of training interventions. While other forms of sexism manifest discrimination against the female gender, reverse sexism indicates a lack of understanding and awareness of what oppression means and how it works, and of the fact that feminism does not necessarily mean hating men. Studies such as this can provide insight into the motivations behind negative organisational climates, unethical behaviour at work, and the failure behind the implementation of diversity policies. Traditional training programmes focused on women, their empowerment, and the deconstruction of internalised misogyny and sexualisation must necessarily be combined with interventions that also involve the other gender. Raising awareness of male privilege could indeed have a significant impact on sexism and contribute to an understanding and sensitivity to the importance of gender equality interventions.

In sum, the present results allow a closer look at the Italian context, highlighting that, here, the levels of sexism remain high on average. This is in line with previous research showing that levels of sexism in Italy tend to be higher than in the U.S. (Mosso et al. 2013). Indeed, in Italy, alongside social changes such as globalisation and multiculturalism, a conservative tendency prevails that produces specific effects and a strong rigidity in gender roles. There is a strong pressure on Italian men and women to conform to "traditional"

models, developing and implementing what they consider to be roles, attitudes, and actions appropriate to their gender. The measurement and detection of reverse sexism could therefore explain how, for the Italian sample, the advancement of women and gender equality are actually perceived as a threat, or, in any case, as something non-traditional and uncomfortable. This finding could indeed imply a greater difficulty for the success and effectiveness of initiatives to foster inclusion and gender equality. Importantly, the Italian BSS scale can contribute to studying the phenomenon in a more implicit way, ultimately enabling the adjustment of policies and strategies to foster inclusion and a diversity climate, in life and in the workplace.

8. Limitation and Future Research

Despite the overall promising results, this research has some limitations. Firstly, the use of self-report measures increased the likelihood of social desirability (Podsakoff et al. 2003). As sexism is a sensitive topic, participants may feel reluctant to admitting holding certain views. Potentially, this resulted in more similar responses and an over-estimation of the correlations between the BSS scale and the other sexism scales.

Another limitation of this research was the use of convenience samples, which limits the generalisability of our findings. Furthermore, our sample, as in the case of the original scale development, consists of people from Europe and Western culture. Future studies should investigate this phenomenon considering other cultures as well, and encourage cross-cultural comparison.

9. Conclusions

In this research, we were the first to provide an Italian version and validation of the BSS scale, paving the ground to further investigate an attitude that has gained traction, in Italy and globally, in recent years. Hence, this research provides an important step to a better understanding of contemporary sexism and helps to explain important social, cultural, and psychological phenomena associated with BSS. Importantly, our findings highlight that BSS—although ostensibly focused on men—ultimately hurts both women and men.

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Institutional Review Board Statement: The study was carried out in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki and the protocol was authorised by the Internal Ethics Committee of the Department of Education Sciences (Psychology Section) of the University of Catania (Ierb-Edunict-2020/4). The relevant research procedures followed all the guidelines of the AIP (Italian Psychology Association) and its Ethics Council.

Informed Consent Statement: Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

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