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BELIEF IN AN UNJUST WORLD AND PERSONALITY TRAITS AS PREDICTORS OF SEXIST ATTITUDES

Abstract

Belief in an unjust world is an alternative scheme of a predictable and meaningful world. The injustice of the world can be seen in various discriminatory attitudes towards people and gender discrimination is one of them. According to the theory of ambivalent sexism, we can distinguish hostile sexism (negative attitudes towards women) and benevolent sexism (women are recipients of male protection and love but gender roles are limited). Our research focuses on the following question: is it possible to predict gender discrimination based on the beliefs in injustice of the world (measured by VUNS; Ćubela-Adorić, 1999) and personality traits (HEXACO-60; Međedović et al., 2019). The Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996), adapted to Serbian language, were used also. The sample consisted of 408 participants, aged 18 to 58 ($M=22.55$; $SD=4.302$). The results showed that males use both form of sexism more frequently than females. The results of hierarchical regression analysis showed that hostile sexism can be predicted by the model which include belief in an unjust world and openness ($R^2=.208$; $F(3,402)=35,654$; $p<.000$), when gender influence is controlled. The belief in an unjust world, emotionality, extraversion and openness ($R^2=.200$; $F(5,400)=14,272$; $p<.000$) proved to be significant predictors of benevolent sexism. Interpretation of results is based on earlier findings.

Key words: belief in an unjust world, ambivalent sexism, hostile and benevolent sexism, HEXACO personality traits, gender differences

Introduction

The notion of believing in world justice has been undergoing numerous reconceptualizations for decades, and one of the ways to determine its meaning is generated by examining its connection with other psychological constructs. This stable personality characteristic, based on the implicit justice motive, is often associated with conservative social attitudes and political views (Nudelman, 2013). During the second half of the 20th century, there have been changes in

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the socio-cultural and political field motivated by the need for achievement of gender equality, and with them the reemergence of old forms of discrimination under new names and different manifestations. The focus of this research will be to examine the changes that have led to new forms of sexism due to the social undesirability, and in some ways illegality of open expression of prejudice towards women. Modern sexism has two forms: overt and covert. Overt sexism refers to the unequal and harmful treatment of women that is easily noticeable. Covert sexism also implies unequal and harmful treatment of women, but this treatment takes place in a hidden and secret way and is therefore not so easily noticed. Covert sexism is characterized by an openly unequal and harmful treatment of women, which goes unnoticed precisely because such behavior is considered common or normal (Šimac, 2017). With the emergence of new forms of discrimination, it seems necessary to examine attitudes about the male-female relations and beliefs about the justice of the modern world in order to ensure further development towards gender equality, as well as other social categories. The main subject of these changes is the individual, with all its characteristics and abilities. Its behavior is primarily guided by his personality, so we will examine whether certain personality traits are behind these beliefs and attitudes.

Ambivalent sexism

As a subset of prejudice, sexism is often used in the context of antipathy towards women. It is assumed that antipathy leads to discriminatory behavior towards the oppressed group and often is justified by the need of society for the existence of a hierarchy (Glick & Fiske, 2001). Glick and Fiske's (1996) theory of ambivalent sexism presupposes a division into hostile and benevolent sexist attitudes toward women. According to this theory, male structural power and interdependence between men and women are factors that contribute to an ambivalent attitude towards the opposite gender. Hostile sexism is directed toward women who threaten the advantage of male structural power (Glick & Fiske, 2001). It refers to negative attitudes towards women based on misogyny (hatred towards women). This type of sexism is aimed at women who step out of traditional roles and thus threaten to jeopardize power relations in the patriarchal system. It also arises from the need for men to defend their superior position in society. On the other hand, benevolent sexism is directed toward women who accept traditional gender roles (Glick & Fiske, 2001). In the background of benevolent sexism lies the comprehension of inferiority of women in gender relations. Due to its positive tone, it is often not recognized as sexism. The authors (Glick & Fiske, 2001) believe that this apparent concern is actually another way to maintain the higher status of men. Benevolent sexism is characterized by positive attitudes towards women, which are characterized as recipients of male protection, idealization and love. But also, stereotypically in limited gender roles (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

Belief in an unjust world

The belief in the justice world is a human need, based on the assumption that people get what they deserve and deserve what they get (Lerner 1980). Lench and Chang (2007) stated that belief in an unjust world is characterized by the insight that people often get what they do not deserve or do not get what they deserve. Also, authors (Lench & Chang, 2007) believe that this is the way an individual copes with negative experiences. When we talk about negative experiences, the feeling of inability to achieve a positive outcome can be perceived as a threat to identity. As a result, individuals feel that a negative event is more a consequence of an unjust world than a reflection of their personal potential. We believe that if a person expresses a belief in an unjust world, that he is more prone to discriminate against others and believes that not all people deserve the same chances in life, therefore he is more prone to express sexist attitudes. In line with that, it could be said that belief in an unjust world has a self-protective function and Lerner (1980) characterizes this strategy as the *penultimate defense*.

HEXACO personality model

Recent studies have indicated that maybe five-factors are not the most adequate model when it comes to describing personality structure. As a solution, a six-factors personality model has been proposed. One of the most well-known operationalizations of the revised model is the HEXACO structure (Lee & Ashton, 2004). This personality model is also operationalized as hierarchical across six domains, each of which has four subordinating traits. It is called HEXACO because it is an acronym for the name of the personality dimension: (a) honesty versus humility (H-honesty / humility) which includes sincerity, justice, avoidance of greed and modesty; then (b) emotionality (E-emotionality) with subdimensions timidity, anxiety, addiction and sentimentality; (c) extraversion (X-eXtraversion) which encompasses social self-esteem, social courage, sociability and liveliness; (e) dimension co-operation versus anger (A-agreeableness) which includes a tendency to forgive, tenderness, flexibility and patience; (e) conscientiousness (C-conscientiousness) includes organization, diligence, perfectionism and prudence; and (f) openness to experience (O-openness) with by respecting aesthetics, curiosity, creativity and unconventionality. From the content of the honesty dimension, it is assumed that this factor represents a personality trait that participates in the generation of morally relevant behavior (Medjedović et al., 2019).

Research problem

Previous research (Dielhl, Rees & Bohner, 2016; Sakalh-Ugurlu, Yalcin & Glick, 2007; Stromwall & Pedersen, 2013; Valor-Segura, Ekxposito & Moya, 2011) has included constructs of ambivalent sexism and beliefs in the injustice of the

world with the aim of examining their predictive power of sexual harassment and attitudes towards rape victims. Despite the number of these researches, the connection between them is rarely examined and does not go beyond examining a correlation between them. Moreover, the results of this researches are often contradictory (Dielhl, et al., 2016; Sakalh-Ugurly, et al., 2007; Stromwall & Pedersen, 2013; Valor-Segura, et al., 2011). Based on this, the goal of our research is to examine whether sexist attitudes towards women, can be predicted based on a belief in an unjust world and HEXACO personality traits. The initial hypothesis is that belief in an unjust world and personality traits contribute to the prediction of sexism. We also assume that there are gender differences in sexism.

Method

Sample

The research sample consists of 408 participants aged 18 to 58 years ($M = 22.55$; $SD = 4.302$). The sample is composed mainly of student respondents, aged 19 to 26, who make up about 90.6% of the sample. Collected sample included people under the age of 19, whose share is 1%, as well as people over the age of 26, who make up the remaining 8.4% of the sample. The sample consists of 91 male subjects and 317 female subjects. Due to the exposed characteristics of the collected sample, when analyzing the data, the variables, gender and age will be treated as control variables.

Instruments

The Scale of Belief in an Unjust World (BUW; Ćubela-Adorić, 1999) is consisted of 10 statements that express basic belief that the world we live in is unjustful (e.g. "Honest people suffer the most"). The respondents estimate the degree of agreement with these statements on a six-point Likert-type scale (1- totally disagree to 6- totally agree), and the total score is determined as the average value of the estimates given on all questions. The reliability of the internal consistency of this one-dimensional construct, expressed through the Cronbach's α coefficient, ranges from .78 to .90 (Ćubela-Adorić, 2002), which was also confirmed on our sample ($\alpha = 0.87$).

Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI; Glick & Fiske, 1996) consists of a dimension of hostile sexism (HS) and dimension of benevolent sexism (BS) towards women. In total, this scale consists of 22 statements (e.g. "Feminists are not seeking for women to have more power than men", "Women should be cherished and protected by men"), to which respondents respond by noting the degree of agreement on a six-point Likert-type scale (0- totally disagree to 5- totally agree). The reliability of this questionnaire expressed through Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, ranged from .83 to .92 for the whole scale; for hostile sexism it ranges between .80 and .92, and for benevolent sexism between .73 and .85 (Glick

& Fiske, 1996). For the purpose of this research, we have translated and adapted this scale into the Serbian language. On our sample, dimension reliability was determined for: hostile sexism ($\alpha=.90$) and benevolent sexism ($\alpha=.85$).

HEXACO Personality Inventory (HEXACO-60; Međedović, Čolović, Dinić & Smederevac, 2019) presents the adaptation of HEXACO-PI-R questionnaire by Lee and Ashton (2016; as cited in Međedović, Čolović, Dinić & Smederevac, 2019) for the Serbian speaking area. The respondents answer on 60 statements that refers to them by recording their self-assessment of the extent using a five-point Likert-type scale (from 1-totally disagree, to 5-totally agree). Internal consistency reliability calculated by Cronbach α coefficient ranges from .78 to .83 (Međedović et al. 2019). Reliability of HEXACO scales on our sample is good enough for research purposes: honesty ($\alpha=0.74$), emotionality ($\alpha=0.75$), extraversion ($\alpha=0.82$), cooperation ($\alpha=0.69$), conscientiousness ($\alpha=0.76$) and openness to experience ($\alpha=0.70$).

Results

Data analysis covers descriptive statistics, gender differences, relations between research variables and regression analysis.

Table 1
Descriptive statistics (Belief in an unjust world, sexism, HEXACO traits)

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Skewness</i>	<i>Kurtosis</i>	<i>K-S</i>
Belief in an unjust world	3.23	.99	1.00	6.00	.193	-.383	.003
Hostile sexism	2.30	1.15	.00	5.00	.035	-.811	.008
Benevolent sexism	2.45	1.02	.00	5.00	.066	-.716	.007
Honesty	3.64	.74	1.00	5.00	-.583	.110	.000
Emotionality	3.33	.71	1.00	5.00	-.228	-.302	.006
Extraversion	3.13	.81	1.00	4.90	-.321	-.417	.000
Cooperation	2.88	.67	1.00	4.80	.087	-.269	.021
Conscientiousness	3.60	.68	1.30	5.00	-.298	-.241	.000
Openness	3.65	.68	1.70	5.00	-.389	-.456	.000

Note: K-S test- significance of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test.

Table 1 shows descriptive data of the examined variables in our sample. The results of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test (Table 1) show that none of the examined variables have normal distribution, but measures of normality of these variables (skewness and kurtosis) indicate that the deviations are not large: skewness ranged from 0.035 (hostile sexism) to -0.583 (honesty); while kurtosis ranged from 0.110 (honesty) to -0.811 (hostile sexism). Based on this data, we used the parametric techniques in further analysis.

Table 2. Inter-correlations between the research variables (Pearson's Correlation Coefficient)

	BUW	Hostile sexism	Benevolent sexism	Honesty	Emotionality	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Conscientiousness	Openness
BUW	1	.							
Hostile sexism	.381**	1							
Benevolent sexism	.290**	.575**	1						
Honesty	-.192**	-.134**	-.121*	1					
Emotionality	.109*	-.044	.099*	.054	1				
Extraversion	-.177**	.016	.184**	.184**	-.177**	1			
Agreeableness	-.231**	-.037	.037	.037	-.036	.036	1		
Conscientiousness	-.241**	-.103**	-.100*	.294**	-.045	.152**	-.036	1	
Openness	-.163**	-.185**	-.218**	.041	.014	.001	.013	.228**	1

Note: BUW- Belief in an unjust world.

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$

From Table 2 it can be seen that the belief in the unjust world is statistically significantly correlated with hostile sexism, benevolent sexism and all personality traits covered by the HEXACO model. The correlation between the belief in an unjust world and hostile sexism is positive and medium in intensity, while the correlation between the belief in an unjust world and benevolent sexism is also positive, but its intensity is low. All correlations of belief in an unjust world and personality

traits are negative and of low intensity, except for the correlation of this construct with emotionality, which has a positive direction. The results further indicate that hostile sexism is statistically significantly associated with belief in an unjust world, benevolent sexism, honesty, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. The correlation of hostile and benevolent sexism is positive and of medium intensity, while the correlation of hostile sexism and honesty, conscientiousness and openness to experience are negative and of low intensity. Further, the results indicate that benevolent sexism is statistically significantly associated with belief in an unjust world, hostile sexism, and personality traits honesty, emotionality, extraversion, conscientiousness, and openness to experience. The correlation of benevolent sexism with the listed personality traits is of low intensity, and while benevolent sexism and emotionality are positively correlated, its correlation with honesty, extraversion, conscientiousness and openness to experience is negative.

To examine the difference between the genders in terms of hostile and benevolent sexism t test for independent samples was used, the results of which are shown in Table 3.

Table 3
Gender difference in the expression of Ambivalent sexism (t test)

Dimension	Gender	N	M	t	p
HS	Male	91	2.77	4.527	.000
	Female	317	2.16		
BS	Male	91	2.65	2.182	.030
	Female	317	2.39		

Note: HS- Hostile sexism BS- Benevolent sexism

The results of the t test indicate that there is a statistically significant difference between the genders when it comes to expression of hostile and benevolent sexism, whereas male respondents show higher scores than women on both subscales. Based on these results, when examining the predictive power of belief in an unjust world for hostile and benevolent sexism, the variable gender was included in the hierarchical regression procedure, in order to control its effect.

In order to determine whether hostile sexism can be predicted based on belief in an unjust world and personality traits honesty, conscientiousness and openness to experience, (which has statistically significant correlation with criterion (see Table 3), hierarchical regression analysis was used, whereby gender effect is controlled.

Table 4
Prediction of hostile sexism based on gender, belief in an unjust world, and personality traits

<i>Model</i>	<i>Predictor variables</i>	<i>B</i>	β	<i>p</i>	<i>Model summary</i>
					R=.219
					R ² =.048
1	Gender	-.604	-.219	.000	ΔR^2 =.048
					F(1,406)=20.494
					<i>p</i> = .000
	Gender	-.594	-.216	.000	R=.475
	BUW	-.407	.352	.000	R ² =.208
2	Honesty	-.017	-.011	.821	ΔR^2 =.160
	Conscientiousness	-.039	-.023	.640	F(4,402)=20.494
	Openness	-.206	-.121	.008	<i>p</i> =.000

Note: BUW- Belief in an unjust world

The results show that the model that predicts hostile sexism based on the belief in an unjust world, and personality traits honesty, conscientiousness and openness to experience, when the effect of gender is controlled, is statistically significant, and that 20.8% of the criterion can be explained based on it. The variable belief in an unjust world, which is also the best predictor of hostile sexism, was singled out as a statistically significant predictor. Another statistically significant predictors are gender and openness to experience.

In order to determine whether benevolent sexism can be predicted based on belief in an unjust world and personality traits honesty, emotionality, extraversion, conscientiousness and openness to experience, which has statistically significant correlation with criterion, (see Table 4), hierarchical regression analysis was used, whereby gender effect is controlled.

Table 5
Prediction of benevolent sexism based on gender, belief in an unjust world, and personality traits

<i>Model</i>	<i>Predictor variables</i>	<i>B</i>	β	<i>p</i>	<i>Model summary</i>
					R=.108
					R ² =.012
1	Gender	-.264	-.108	.000	ΔR^2 =.012
					F(1,406)=4.763
					<i>p</i> = .030

	Gender	-.341	-.139	.005	
	BUW	.287	.279	.000	R=.447
	Honesty	-.019	-.014	.782	R ² =.200
2	Emotionality	.234	.164	.001	ΔR ² =.188
	Extraversion	.321	.254	.000	F(6,402)=14.274
	Conscientiousness	-.041	-.028	.579	p=.000
	Openness	-.253	-.168	.000	

Note: BUW- Belief in an unjust world

The results show that the model that predicts benevolent sexism based on the belief in an unjust world, and personality traits honesty, emotionality, extraversion, conscientiousness and openness to experience, when the effect of gender is controlled, is statistically significant, and that 20% of the criteria can be explained based on it. The variable belief in an unjust world, which is also the best predictor of hostile sexism, was singled out as a statistically significant predictor. Another statistically significant predictors are gender, emotionality, extraversion and openness to experience.

Discussion

The aim of this research was to examine the relationship between belief in an unjust world and personality traits, on the one side, and ambivalent sexism on the other side.

Before testing the main hypothesis, we examined whether there were gender differences in term of ambivalent sexism. The results showed that there is statistically significant difference between genders on both dimensions on ambivalent sexism scale and that men tend to have higher scores on hostile, as well as on benevolent sexism subscale. The explanation for these results given by Dovidio, Glick and Rudman (Dovidio, Glick & Rudman, 2008) is that traditional ideals can influence the increase of inequality. According to them, it is up to the man to take the initiative, while the woman needs to be compliant and modest to please the man. Also, these results can be explained by traditional social roles to which men are attributed more power and higher status in society. On the other side, the emergence of benevolent sexism in men can be under the influence of the belief that women are the weaker gender who need protection (Leaper & Robnett, 2013).

Examination of the main hypothesis indicate that both subscales of ambivalent sexism can be predicted by belief in an unjust world and personality traits covered by HEXACO model, when gender influence is controlled. The results showed that hostile sexism can be predicted by model that include belief in an unjust world and personality trait openness to experience. While, benevolent sexism can be predicted by model which include belief in an unjust world, extraversion and openness to experience.

The research problem is formulated on the basis of previous researches that included ambivalent sexism and belief in an (un)just world as predictors of other constructs, as victim blaming and domestic violence (Dielhl, et al., 2016; Sakalh-Ugurlu, et al., 2007; Stromwall & Pedersen, 2013; Valor-Segura, et al., 2011). However, their analysis included only a correlation study between them. These authors (Sakalh-Ugurlu, et al., 2007; Valor-Segura, et al., 2011) report about positive correlation between belief in an unjust world and ambivalent sexism. Explanation of their relationship, in predicting of victim blaming, can be seen in system-justifying attitudes which are basis of both belief in an unjust word and sexist attitudes (Sakalh- Ugurlu, et al., 2007). Precisely, individua who endorse hostile sexism are more likely to believe that women act as "sexual teases", while people who endorse benevolent sexism are more likely to dislike women who are not living up to benevolently sexist ideals. Moreover, individuals who strongly believe in a just world are prone to victim blaming in order to preserve their belief in justice. Correlation of this construct can be also seen from the point of view that sexism as ideology of gender relationships is a specific manifestation of a broader ideology of injustice of the world (Valor-Segura, et al., 2011).

The model used to predict hostile sexism, as well as benevolent sexism, also included personality trait openness to experience. Its contribution to the predictive model can be explained by definition of this personality trait. Openness to experience influences acceptance of others, of ideals and models (Vick, 2014), therefore people with high scores on this scale are less likely to discriminate others. On the other hand, people low in openness tend to value clear, unambiguous (and potentially inflexible) moral prescripts and rules (Sibely, Harding, Perry, Asbrock & Duckitt, 2010), as it is seen in traditional view on gender roles. Some authors (Ekehammar & Akrami, 2007) point out that openness is the strongest predictor of prejudice, which includes sexism. Openness includes components as nonconformity, unconventionality and it relates positively to liberalism, which could imply a negative relationship between openness and any form of prejudice.

Extraversion also stood out as a statistically significant predictor of benevolent sexism. Vick's (2014) explanation of these results is that people who are more assertive in their decision-making and beliefs would potentially rate higher on sexism. Duo to positive tone of benevolent sexism, they could respond to such questions in a more upfront manner than those who are less sociable. Similar results are reported by the other authors (Ekehammar & Akrami 2007), who believe that friendliness, attachment to others and experiencing positive emotions, as aspects of extraversion, contribute to the extraversion-prejudice relationship.

Conclusion

Theoretical goal of this research is further understanding relationship between personality with its traits, beliefs and values, at one side, and discriminatory attitudes, on the other side. These attitudes often determine people's behavior toward each other, attributing social roles, and limiting opportunities within a particular social group, and even discrimination. Also, the results of this research can potentially lead to paving the way to achieving a practical goal, ie. further development towards gender equality, as well as other social categories.

The main contribution of this research is the adaptation of the scale of ambivalent sexism in the Serbian language, as well as checking its applicability in our environment. The contribution of research is also reflected in linking belief in an unjust world and ambivalent sexism at a higher level, since previous research has examined only their correlation.

As broader implications of the results of this research, we believe that there is a need for changes in the upbringing of children in order to reduce discrimination and develop a picture of the world as supportive one in which they can realize their potential without fear of consequences of belonging to certain groups. What is common to the development of these beliefs and values is their root in the earliest interactions that children have with other people, which we can use to achieve this goal.

Further research could focus on gathering a more representative sample, with the aim of examining the differences between men and women in terms of the belief in unjust world and ambivalent sexism, as well as the use of other personality inventories to examine the relationship of these constructs.

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