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Through Medusa's Gaze: Exploring Women's Perception of Gender Inequalities and its Relevance to Social Change

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To my granny Adalgisa.

To her generous, eloquent, cheeky, and nurturing spirit.

Strong, tenacious, and irreverent, as only a man could afford to be in her times.

Every morning, my "nonna piccola," would gather her long hair into a braid fastened behind her neck, preparing to toil hard to feed her family, shining with the lively and colorful spirit that was uniquely hers.

In a time when women were only expected to bear and care for their families, she, a mother of five, with her remarkably low tolerance for injustice, insisted on managing her finances and actively participating in family decisions.

Proud to be your grandchild, and that a bit of that rebellious blood flows in my veins.

Abstract

Despite the considerable progress that has been made toward achieving gender equality, women still face important disparities across many life domains, from the professional to the family context. Policymakers have recently started to distinguish between these different domains to provide more accurate measurements of inequalities, and more easily identify areas where interventions are most needed. However, this trend has not been mirrored in social psychology, despite its potential to offer valuable knowledge on women's psychological reactions to perceiving inequalities in each of these dimensions. Therefore, to fill this gap, the current dissertation provides a thorough understanding of the meaning of perceived gender inequalities affecting women and explores some of the associated psychological reactions. Specifically, Chapter 1 provides an overview of the main theoretical foundations of the current dissertation, namely the social identity approach, the rejection-identification model, and the theory of relative deprivation. Chapters 2 to 6 include a series of empirical studies divided into four sections, tackling the understanding of perceived gender inequalities affecting women and the domains around which they unfold (Section A), and the associations between such perceptions and social identity processes and collective action (Section B), professional aspirations (Section C) and attitudes toward minority groups (Section D) among women.

In particular, Section A focused on developing a multidimensional conceptualization of perceived gender inequalities and providing a useful tool for researchers in this space. For doing so, Chapter 2 included a pilot qualitative study and five quantitative studies conducted in Italy and the United Kingdom (N_{tot} = 1690) through which we developed and validated an instrument measuring perceptions of gender inequalities. Section B aimed to disentangle the relation between the perception of gender inequalities, social identification with women and

feminists, and women's collective action intentions, considering the key role of legitimacy perceptions around inequalities. To gather robust evidence of the hypothesized relationships, Chapter 3 included two correlational studies conducted in Italy and Turkey (N_{tot} = 976) whereas Chapter 4 included one experimental study conducted in the UK (N = 293). Exploring a less documented outcome, Section C intended to unfold the effects of perceiving inequalities on women's career aspirations. Taking into consideration contingencies of self-worth, Chapter 5 included two correlational studies among university students in Italy and Spain (N_{tot} = 819). Section D aimed to uncover the relationship between perceiving inequalities and a more distal outcome, namely attitudes towards other minorities, which have been often overlooked in gender inequality research. For doing so, Chapter 6 included a correlational study among Italians (N = 493) and assessed the relationship between perceiving gender inequalities and their attitudes towards different minority groups that are highly stigmatized in Italy, namely gays and lesbians, trans women, and migrants.

Last, the concluding chapter (Chapter 7) presented an outline and discussion of the main findings of the present dissertation, addressing theoretical and practical implications, limitations, and direction for future research. Overall, the present work highlights the need for adopting a multidimensional understanding of gender inequalities in both research and interventions aimed at creating awareness and reducing gender inequalities.

Keywords: gender equality, women, social change, social identification, collective action, professional aspirations, intergroup attitudes

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Chapter 1

General Introduction

Percy Bysshe Shelley concludes one of his 1819 poems, "On the Medusa of Leonardo Da Vinci in the Florentine Gallery," with the lines "*A woman's countenance*, with serpent-locks / Gazing in death on Heaven from those wet rocks." Indeed, Medusa's narrative is inherently a woman's story, and any analysis must consider her gender for a comprehensive understanding. Medusa's story is one of the most famous tales of Greek mythology and portrays her as a monstrous Gorgon with snake hair and a petrifying gaze that would turn anyone who looked at her into stone. Despite being generally deemed as an evil character, Medusa was not always a monster.

Before her transformation, Medusa was a mortal woman of great beauty and a priestess in the temple of Athena – a prestigious role for the time that likely involved a stringent selection process (Graves, 1955). Was Medusa good at tending to the sacred space? Information about her competence has not been handed down to us (differently from her beauty), but we know that her career was abruptly ended after the god Poseidon violated her in Athena's temple. The goddess herself punished Medusa, by transforming her into the monstrous figure we know nowadays. Differently, Poseidon's fate was likely unaltered after the rape, a sign of the power imbalance and the gendered consequences of the deed (McDaniel, 2022).

In sum, despite her relatively prestigious position, Medusa's narrative overshadows her competence and only stresses her feminine beauty. Not only was she a victim of workplace sexual harassment (needless to say, a situation imposed upon her without her consent or agency), but she was also unjustly terminated. Furthermore, failing to conform to gendered social expectations left her a societal outcast, made unable to form any more relationships, while her perpetrator Poseidon got away with his crime, by virtue of being a

god and a male. Although this story is thousands of years old, this narrative echoes a sadly familiar and still timely societal pattern.

In fact, without disregarding the substantial progress that has been made in the last century in terms of gender equality, women are still subject to inequality in many life domains (EIGE, 2023; World Economic Forum, 2023). For example, the phenomenon of harassment against women is still very prominent. About 30% of women have been victims of some form of abuse (WHO, 2021), and, in comparison to men, experience intimate partner violence more frequently and from a younger age (Cunningham & Anderson, 2023). Additionally, throughout the world, women are still underrepresented in the workplace, especially in leadership roles (e.g., Ryan, 2023), and the gender pay gap – the difference between women's and men's earnings – has not been closed in any country worldwide (World Economic Forum, 2023). Similarly, significant gender gaps remain in STEM educational fields, such as physics, engineering, and mathematics, where women still represent a minority (Casad et al., 2021). On the contrary, women are overrepresented in other fields that are more stereotype-congruent (involving warmth and care; Ellemers, 2018), such as psychology, education, or nursing (Thelwall et al., 2019).

Interestingly, even in such fields where women are the majority of students at the undergraduate level, they rarefy as proceeding to the educational ladder (Gruber et al., 2021; van Veelen & Derks, 2022). This large alignment with the gender stereotype of women as caring and patient is also mirrored in the disproportionately higher number of women in heterosexual relationships who are significantly more involved in household chores and care responsibilities than their male partners, a phenomenon that can be found in virtually all countries (OECD, 2021).

More generally, societal expectations about what a woman ought to be influence a large body of gender inequalities affecting women, including in the domains of sexuality (Conley & Klein, 2022) and appearance (Ramati-Ziber et al., 2020). When women violate such expectations, like in the case of Medusa, they often encounter severe backlash (Bareket et al., 2018; Rudman et al., 2012; Weaving et al., 2023). While these aspects of gender inequalities tend to be spread globally to different extents, gender inequalities also take up specific manifestations in certain global regions, such as the example of female genital mutilation in some cultures (Momoh, 2017).

Taking a broader stance, one could define "gender inequalities" as all the different situations in which people are treated differently or have access to different resources only on the basis of their gender (Lorber, 2001). While objective levels of gender inequalities are important, from a social-psychological perspective it is even more important to analyze women's subjective experiences of this structural inequality, as this is what ultimately triggers people's psychological reactions (Jetten et al., 2017). Along these lines, the current dissertation aims to better understand women's perceptions of gender inequalities affecting women and to shed light on some of their correlates. In this first introductory chapter, we delineated the three main frameworks that constituted the theoretical foundations of this line of research and provided an overview of the empirical sections and their aims.

We for She: From the Social Identity Approach to the Rejection-Identification Model

The Social Identity Approach

Not only does the existence of such inequalities impact women in the sense that women, as such, are more likely to experience these outcomes, but they also shape the psychological meaning associated with being a woman. In this regard, the social identity approach (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Reicher et al., 2010; Turner & Reynolds, 2001) can help to explain how individuals' psychological reactions are shaped by perceived group-based inequality.

The social identity approach stems from two foundational theories: social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) and self-categorization theory (SCT; Turner et al., 1987). The former posits that individuals categorize themselves and others into social groups, leading to intergroup comparisons that may foster in-group favoritism, while the latter emphasizes the dynamic nature of social identity and highlights how individuals – whose identities can be hierarchically organized on three levels of categorization, from personal to ingroup (vs. outgroup) to human (superordinate) categorization – categorize themselves differently into different social contexts, influencing their behavior and attitudes accordingly.

At the core of the social identity approach lies the understanding that people do not simply define themselves as individuals with their own unique set of traits (personal identity, as "I"), but also in light of some characteristics that they share with others, which can create a shared group membership (social identity, as "we"; Turner & Reynolds, 2001). When this shared social identity is (made) salient, individuals become aware of their commonalities with others who share the same social identity ("we, women") and their distinctions from those who do not share this identity ("them, men"), and their group membership becomes the lens through which they see and operate in the world (Jetten, Haslam, et al., 2017). That is, they tune their cognition, attitudes, and behaviors to those whom they share a social identity with (Stevens et al., 2017; Turner et al., 1987), and, importantly, group members are then motivated to maintain a positive group identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

Perceiving that one's group is a victim of inequality, as it can happen among women, does not align with having a positive group image, and ingroup members will be motivated to solve this dissonance (Ellemers, 2002). For instance, when perceiving that the group boundaries are permeable, meaning that group members can move from one group to another, they may choose to exit the group and join a higher-status group (e.g., Armenta et al., 2017). When opting out is not an option, but the inequalities are considered to be legitimate, people

can engage in social creativity processes (Abrams & Hogg, 1990, 2006). For example, if women see gender disparities in the workplace, they – as the disadvantaged group – may react by intensifying their endorsement of stereotypical beliefs about genders and reinforcing the belief that men and women have complementary qualities by which women are likely to be less successful at work (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Jost & Kay, 2005; Laurin et al., 2011). This involves attributing distinct and complementary skills to men (competence and work orientation) and women (warmth and caregiving), enabling individuals to uphold a positive group image through the identification of a novel dimension for intergroup comparison (Ellemers, 2002, 2018; Jost & Kay, 2005).

However, a lot of the research within the social identity tradition has focused on when group boundaries are not permeable, the inequality is seen as illegitimate and a cognitive alternative to the disadvantaging situation is available, in which case ingroup members are motivated to get together and try to reestablish a positive group image, by subverting the status quo (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; Jetten, Iyer, et al., 2017; Turner et al., 1987). In this regard, some of the most influential theoretical models are the social identity model of collective action (SIMCA; Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; van Zomeren et al., 2008, 2012), focusing on the key role that social identification has in allowing ingroup members to see the inequalities affecting their group and in turn in supporting social change, and the encapsulated model of social identity in collective action (EMSICA; Thomas et al., 2009, 2012), highlighting the dynamics under which perceiving inequality fuels identification with an opinion-based group and hence fosters participation in collective action. Despite the notable differences between these models, the common denominator lies in their acknowledgment that perceived group-based inequality is key to collective support for change.

The Rejection-Identification Model

Stemming from the social identity approach, the rejection-identification model (Branscombe et al., 1999) provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how individuals respond to group-based inequality. When group members perceive to be discriminated against because of their group membership, that is, they attribute the unequal treatment they receive to group-based prejudice, they encounter negative outcomes, such as threats to their social identity and lower well-being (Schmitt et al., 2014). Simultaneously, such attribution to group-based discrimination is associated with strengthened identification with their group. Not only does thinking about instances of group-based discrimination make one's identity salient, but it also motivates victims of inequality to rely more strongly on their group, as an asset to cope with the disadvantage and a psychological resource from which to draw a positive self-concept (Branscombe et al., 1999; Jetten et al., 2001, 2018). In this sense, identification with one's group becomes a strategic coping mechanism that may involve seeking social and instrumental support, aligning with the norms and values of the group, and contributing both to individual coping and collective empowerment (Drury & Reicher, 2009; Haslam et al., 2016; Jetten, Haslam, et al., 2017; Rathbone et al., 2023).

The rejection-identification model found empirical support among various populations, from ethnic groups (Branscombe et al., 1999; Cobb et al., 2019) to people with a medical condition (Molero et al., 2011; Wellman et al., 2022) to people with a stigmatized trait, such as the elderly (Garstka et al., 2004) or people with piercings (Jetten et al., 2001), while research on gender groups has received relatively less attention (Redersdorff et al., 2004; Schmitt et al., 2002). Schmitt et al. (2002) found that the rejection-identification model was replicated among women, but not among men, suggesting that perceived discrimination has different effects among low-status and high-status groups. Consistently with the latter study, Redersdorff et al. (2004) only found evidence for the rejection-identification model

among women with a gender counter-stereotypical occupation and not among women with a gender stereotypical occupation. These findings show that the relationship between perceived inequality and social identity is shaped by contextual factors, such as the severity and the pervasiveness of discrimination. Hence, in situations where discrimination is pervasive, individuals may engage in sustained efforts to fortify their social identification as an ongoing strategy for coping and resistance.

Theory of Relative Deprivation

Another theoretical framework that can help to understand why perceiving inequality is such an important psychological phenomenon is the theory of relative deprivation (Runciman, 1966; see Smith et al., 2012 for a review). The model was one of the first lines of work that discovered that actual levels of inequality are not that important in determining people's reactions, but subjective perceptions of such inequality are a much more powerful psychological determinant. At the core of the theory is the notion that people often make intergroup comparisons with other groups, and when one of such comparisons leads them to believe that they are not being granted what they deserve, they experience group-based relative deprivation (Walker & Pettigrew, 1984). That is, for people to experience group-based relative deprivation, the intergroup comparison must not only highlight a differential treatment, status, or access to resources between the two groups but, fundamentally, such difference is appraised as unfair (Wright & Tropp, 2002).

Applying this theoretical lens to gender inequalities, women navigating societal structures may find themselves in situations where they perceive systemic disparities relative to men, for example in the workplace, but without appraising this discrepancy as unfair, no relative deprivation occurs. Together with the cognitive awareness of the disadvantage, a key component of group-based relative deprivation is the emotional expression that comes with it,

usually feelings of anger and resentment, which intensifies psychological reactions to perceived inequality (Smith et al., 2012).

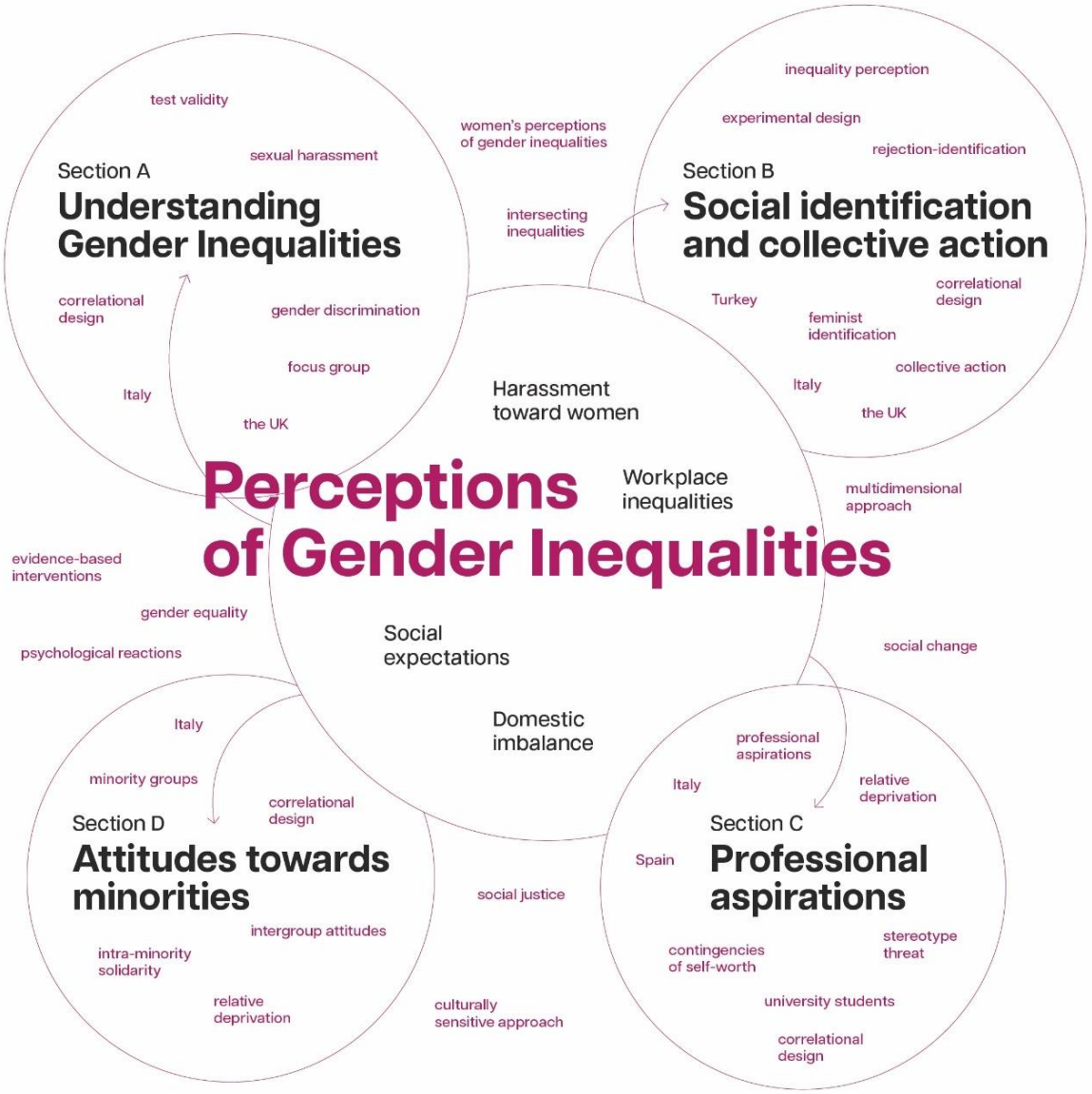
Research on group-based relative deprivation has focused on two main lines of studies. On the one hand, a large body of research suggests that when people experience group-based relative deprivation they are more inclined to join forces to support social change through collective action (Power et al., 2020; Smith et al., 2012). While there is robust evidence for this relationship (Smith & Pettigrew, 2015), women's feelings of relative deprivation and how they associate with collective action in favor of gender equality have been overlooked (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995). On the other hand, group-based relative deprivation was linked to intergroup attitudes, so that when people experienced more relative deprivation – and hence more threat – they showed more negative attitudes towards the advantaged group that can be perceived as responsible for the inequality (Duckitt & Mphuthing, 2002; Moscatelli et al., 2014). Interestingly, when feeling relatively deprived, people also show more negative attitudes towards minorities too (Jetten et al., 2015; Pettigrew et al., 2008). To our knowledge, no research has examined how women's experience of relative deprivation is associated with intergroup attitudes.

Overview of the Present Dissertation

The present PhD research aims to contribute to the understanding of the meaning of perceived gender inequalities affecting women and an exploration of some of the correlates of such perceptions, and it is made of 4 different empirical sections, each with its own aims (Figure 1-1). Specifically, the studies reported in Section A aimed to understand how women perceive gender inequalities affecting women and around which domains such perceptions unfold. In Section B we intended to assess the intricate relationships between these different dimensions of perceived gender inequalities, social identification processes, and collective action intentions.

Figure 1-1.

Graphical representation of presented thesis.



The research reported in Section C aimed to untangle the relationship between perceptions of gender inequalities and women's professional aspirations among university students. Last, in Section D we aimed to investigate the association between women's perceptions of gender inequalities and their attitudes toward other minority groups.

Section A

In recent years, policymakers have been trying to discern and measure different aspects of the phenomenon of gender inequalities, with the purpose of being able to seize important nuances in multiple domains while also not losing sight of the bigger picture and standardizing the assessment across different countries. For example, the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE) has decomposed the problem into eight different subdomains, namely work, money, knowledge, time, power, health, violence against women, and intersecting inequalities. The benefits of making such a distinction are twofold. On the one hand, it is easier to measure how much inequality there is in each domain and provide a nuanced description of a problem that is deeply rooted in our societies. On the other hand, it makes it easier to identify areas where interventions are most needed.

Although this approach can be useful to describe and intervene on the issue, social psychology has not mirrored this trend, and, even though research on gender issues is on the rise (Santoniccolo et al., 2023), the approaches are either generalist – for instance, people are asked to think or provide an overall evaluation of gender inequality (Kinias & Kim, 2012) – or compartmentalized, so that for instance a line of research may assess how women experience gender inequalities in the workplace without consideration of other aspects (e.g., Mazzuca et al., 2022; Tougas & Veilleux, 1988).

In an attempt to tackle these limitations, Section A took a multidimensional approach to gender inequalities and inquired about how women perceive them. Merging a top-down approach – whereby relevant literature on gender inequalities was thoroughly explored – with a bottom-up one – in virtue of which several women were interviewed about their perceptions of and experiences with gender inequalities, **Chapter 2** reported 5 Studies that developed and validated an instrument measuring perceptions of gender inequalities across two different national contexts – namely Italy and the UK, providing a useful tool for research in this

space. Additionally, by showing distinct psychological outcomes related to each dimension of perceived inequality, this chapter brought initial evidence of the importance of differentiating between components of inequality, because this approach allowed us to capture the complexity of the psychological reaction to inequality that a unidimensional approach would not be able to seize. Such knowledge is not simply a theoretical refinement but is crucial to building evidence-based interventions to reduce the effects of gender inequalities.

Section B

Research has informed how when people perceive group-based discrimination they can respond by identifying more strongly with their group, and this strategy represents a buffer against the negative effects of discrimination on individuals' well-being (Branscombe et al., 1999). At the same time, research has long established that when individuals identify strongly with a particular group suffering from group-based discrimination, they are more likely to see – through the lens of such group membership – more of the inequalities affecting their group, and respond by engaging in support for social change (SIMCA; Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021).

By bringing together these two lines of research, Section B aimed to uncover the associations between perceived gender inequalities - in their multiple dimensions, social identification processes, and intentions to engage in collective action for gender equality. Although the replication of previous findings was an important aim of this section (such as the association between perceived inequality and collective action intentions; Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021), it also came with several novel aspects. First, adopting a multidimensional conceptualization of perceived gender inequalities allowed us to seize how different aspects of inequalities differently affect social identification processes and collective action intentions. Secondly, not only it examined how perceived inequalities are associated with ingroup identification (i.e., women), but also how they could lead to the formation of a

politicized identity, by looking at the associations with social identification with feminists. Third, the research reported in Section B spanned three very different contexts with regard to gender equality, namely Italy, Turkey, and the UK, which – while shedding light on the fundamental psychological process through which women forge social identities and rally behind collective action – also suggested considerations over the importance of the social contexts in shaping women's reactions to gender inequality.

More specifically, **Chapter 3** sought to shed light on the association between perceived gender inequalities, social identification with women and feminists, and collective action intentions in Italy and Turkey. **Chapter 4**, employing an experimental design, aimed to test how perceiving inequalities in the workplace and the domestic sphere influenced women's social identification with other women, with feminists and their support for collective and private action.

Section C

While the relationship between perceived inequality and collective action intentions has been widely investigated in the past decades of research on disadvantaged groups (see Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021 for the most recent review), a less explored avenue is that of the direct effects of perceived inequalities on career aspirations (e.g., Zoogah, 2010). However, in the face of the increasing awareness of gender issues, it seems important to better understand how perceiving that women face disadvantages in several domains is associated with their professional aspirations. On the one hand, the relative deprivation tradition makes it plausible to expect that the more women perceive such inequalities the stronger their intentions to change the status quo (Smith et al., 2012), and nurturing high professional aspirations may be a way forward. On the other hand, the stereotype threat research has emphasized how perceiving negative information and stereotypes about one's ingroup has severe consequences for members of disadvantaged groups, and can make them

disengage with the task or domain relative to such information (Spencer et al., 2016). In this sense, aware of all the disadvantages that women face, women may foster lower career aspirations.

Thus, Section C aimed to bring to attention a more proximal correlates of perceived gender inequalities, by shedding light on a personal-level variable, namely professional aspirations. **Chapter 5**, including two correlational studies conducted in Italy and Spain, aimed to understand the association between perceived gender inequalities and professional aspirations among university students who identified as women, and explored whether contingencies of self-worth played a role in this relationship (Crocker et al., 2003).

Section D

While previous research has mainly focused on how gender inequalities and their perceptions thereafter impact women's well-being (e.g., Hackett et al., 2019; Vigod & Rochon, 2020), less attention has been paid to more distal correlates of gender inequalities, such as intergroup attitudes. However, considering that women represent over half of the global population and acknowledging the role that coalitions of multiple disadvantaged groups can play in shaping intergroup relations and facilitating social justice, it appears fundamental to understand how women – when perceiving to be discriminated against along multiple domains – embrace more or less favorable attitudes towards other groups that are victims of structural inequalities too. Theoretically, both directions of the effect could be plausible. On the basis of relative deprivation theorizing, we could expect that higher perceptions of gender inequalities may be related to greater prejudice towards minority groups (Runciman, 1966; Smith & Pettigrew, 2014). On the contrary, research on intra-minority solidarity has shown that for instance, when identifying a common threat between minorities, minority membership might also foster positive attitudes toward outgroups and

hence we could also hypothesize that higher perceptions of gender inequalities may be associated with less prejudice towards other minorities (Craig & Richeson, 2012, 2016).

Section D aimed to shed light on such intergroup dynamics by examining whether and how perceiving gender inequality is associated with women's attitudes toward minority groups. Hence, **Chapter 6** investigated the interplay between perceived gender inequalities and attitudes towards three other groups that face structural disadvantages, namely gays and lesbians, transgender women, and immigrants. In doing so, we also considered the role of emotional reactions to gender inequality and perceived social norms of one's group of friends related to gender equality.

Lastly, **Chapter 7**, the concluding chapter of this dissertation, included a discussion of the main findings stemming from this research, considering theoretical and practical implications, as well as its main limitations and directions for future research. In sum, this chapter provides a broad overview of the importance of acknowledging the multidimensional nature of gender inequalities, in light of approaching the complexity of inequalities through a more ingrained lens.

Section A

Chapter 2

The Unbearable Weight of Gender Inequalities: Development and Validation of the Multidimensional Gender Inequalities Perception Inventory – Women's form (MGIPI-W) [1]

[1] Ciaffoni, S., Rubini, M., & Moscatelli, S. (2023). The Unbearable Weight of Gender Inequalities: Development and Validation of the Multidimensional Gender Inequalities Perception Inventory – Women's form (MGIPI-W) *Manuscript underwent the second round of reviews in Sex Roles (IF=3,812; Q1).*

Abstract

Gender inequalities impact various aspects of life, yet their multifaced nature is often overlooked in research. To fill this gap, we developed and validated the 16-item Multidimensional Gender Inequality Perception Inventory – Women's form (MGIPI-W) across different samples of women and different cultural contexts (Italy and the UK). Using exploratory (Study 1, N = 703) and confirmatory (Study 2, N = 550; Study 3, N = 132; Study 5, N = 201) factor analysis, we identified four dimensions: workplace inequalities, domestic imbalance, harassment towards women, and social expectations. Studies 3 and 4 (N = 96) demonstrated convergent, discriminant, and predictive validity of the MGIPI-W, linking the MGIPI-W's subscales to group-based emotions, reported experiences of sexism, attitudes towards affirmative action, and attitudes towards women's sexual freedom. Whereas Studies 1 to 4 were conducted in Italy, Study 5 replicated the MGIPI-W's four-factor structure in the UK and provided further evidence of the MGIPI-W's validity, by testing its incremental validity over and above a unidimensional approach. Additionally, Study 5 also compared our scale to a measure of personal experiences of sexism and showed that the MGIPI-W predicts group-level outcomes above and beyond women's personal experiences of sexism. The distinct predictions of the four subscales underscore the importance of considering diverse facets of gender inequalities in understanding women's reactions. These findings carry implications for researchers, educators, policymakers, psychologists, and society at large, as they highlight that conceptualizing gender inequalities as a multidimensional issue can inform more effective interventions and address this pervasive issue more systematically.

Keywords: gender equality, sex discrimination, sexual harassment, employment discrimination, test validity, gender role attitudes

Introduction

In social relations, no single attribute is more primary than gender (Ellemers, 2018; Ridgeway, 2009). Gender is the most significant characteristic that people use to differentiate others, and categorizations based on gender are chronically salient, relatively fixed, and instantly detected (Haslam et al., 2000; Wood & Eagly, 2010). Nowadays, our society increasingly acknowledges that gender is a powerful determinant of one's opportunities and treatment, as well as disparities and discrimination (e.g., EIGE, 2023; Ellemers, 2018; Miller, 2020).

Gender inequalities can manifest in both overt discrimination and more subtle, covert forms (Lorber, 2001), and, importantly, do not just refer to a single well-defined domain (Vachhani & Pullen, 2019). When reflecting on gender inequalities, one may, for example, think of the gender employment gap, which is the difference between the employment rate of men and that of women. In Europe, in 2021 it amounted to 10.8%, rising to 20% in countries such as Romania, Italy, and Greece (Eurostat, 2022).

Alternatively, one may also be thinking of the fact that women are much more likely than men to be targets of sexual harassment or sexual violence. The World Health Organization estimates that globally about one in three women (30%) have been subjected to some form of physical and/or sexual abuse (WHO, 2021). Furthermore, gender inequalities can be observed in the family context (e.g., Allen, 2016) as well as in access to certain educational paths (STEM; e.g., Casad et al., 2021) and health care (Socías et al., 2016). Thus, generally speaking, gender inequalities can be defined as all instances in which people are allowed different opportunities or treatments solely based on their gender (Lorber, 2001).

A growing interest in comprehensively mapping out domains of gender inequalities has been shown by some academics and policymakers (e.g., Stoet & Geary, 2019). For

instance, the European Institute for Gender Equality has identified eight core domains relating to work, money, knowledge, power, time and health, violence against women, and intersecting inequalities (EIGE, 2023). While the data publicly available on each of these components of gender inequalities surely have a clear story to tell, it is well-established that it is people's perception of those inequalities that determines their reactions, and not actual inequality per se (Jetten et al., 2017; Mols & Jetten, 2017). That is, objective inequality is just one of the factors that determine the way people appraise their disadvantage, which is influenced by a variety of social psychological processes, such as social comparison, or the perception of inequality as (il)legitimate (Jetten & Peters, 2019). Despite the importance of evaluating individuals' subjective experience, the available tools measuring perceptions of gender inequality are mainly either independent of the domains in which such inequalities occur or focused on women's perceptions of specific forms of gender inequalities at the time (e.g., Harryson et al., 2012; Johnson et al., 2017; Koss et al., 2007), thus failing to capture the complexity of disadvantages that are oftentimes intertwined.

The aim of the current paper is to address this gap in the literature and create and validate a social psychological tool to assess perceptions of gender inequalities affecting women within different contexts (e.g., in the workplace, in domestic life, etc.) in which different facets of inequality come into play, thus providing a composite representation of this heinous phenomenon touching multiple areas of women's life. In this respect, it is important to acknowledge that, stemming from social roots embedded in a patriarchal system, gender inequalities affect all gender groups in different ways – from cisgender women and men (e.g., Richardson et al., 2021) to transgender, non-binary, and gender-diverse individuals (e.g., Morgenroth et al., 2023) – and understanding inequality becomes even more complex when considering intersectional identities (Salvati & Koc, 2022; Sardelis et al., 2017).

To address the multidimensional nature of gender inequalities, this research prioritizes an initial focus on the experiences that women face *as women* as a necessary foundational step towards untangling the intricate layers of these inequalities. While primarily intended to capture the experiences of cisgender women, we acknowledge the potential relevance of these findings to transgender women, while also recognizing that inequalities in this group involve additional dimensions (e.g., identity denial; Morgenroth et al., 2023). For this reason, we used the term "women" without further specifications.

Specifically, in Study 1 we developed a scale assessing perceptions of gender inequalities among women; in Study 2 we tested its robustness in a different sample; in Studies 3 and 4 we tested its convergent, predictive, and discriminant validity. Whereas Studies 1 to 4 were conducted in Italy, Study 5 examined the structure of the scale in the UK, with the aim of expanding its validity by considering a different linguistic and cultural context.

Not only do Italy and the UK face different situations in terms of gender equality progress, being respectively the 61st and the 22nd most gender-equal countries according to the Gender Equality Index (World Economic Forum, 2021), but they are also characterized by different levels of awareness around gender issues. For instance, feminist movements had a very influential role in the UK in the shaping of a more gender-equal society, while in Italy they did not have the same success and following among laypeople (Briatte, 2020; Margolis, 1993). In a recent survey by the Pew Research Centre, 92% of the people in the UK claimed that it is very important that women have the same rights as men, while this percentage dropped to only 74% in Italy (Pew Research Centre, 2019). Besides assessing the reliability and the validity of the MGIPI-W in a different context, Study 5 sought to demonstrate how using a multidimensional scale – tapping the perceptions of women's condition at a group level – can help understand women's reactions to inequality above and beyond their personal

experiences of sexism. While we believe that it is theoretically and ethically imperative to examine, as a first step, how women themselves see and respond to gender inequalities affecting women, we advance that this measurement can be applied to assess perceptions of women's experiences of gender inequalities across other gender groups as well.

Uneven Opportunities and Responsibilities: Gender Inequalities in Career and Home Life

One of the most salient aspects of gender inequalities is that women encounter more obstacles than men when starting and maintaining their professional careers. One such obstacle is the gender pay gap, which indicates that controlling for job type and level of education of the employee, women are paid less than men (Bishu & Alkadry, 2017). Similarly, an unequal distribution exists in career types (women dominate "feminine jobs," such as jobs involving care or education) and job levels (women are rare in leadership positions; e.g., Petrongolo, 2019). The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated such gender gaps (Fisher & Ryan, 2021).

The underrepresentation of women in the workplace, especially in higher-status positions, has been described by a number of allegorical theoretical constructs such as the glass ceiling (Cotter et al., 2001), the sticky floor (Harlan & White Berheide, 1994), the leaky pipeline (Cronin & Roger, 1999), the glass cliff phenomena (Ryan & Haslam, 2005, 2007), and the perfection bias (Menegatti et al., 2021; Moscatelli et al., 2020; Prati et al., 2019). As a common denominator, all these constructs highlight how the workplace perpetuates a system where women are systematically prevented from sustainably accessing career tracks that would result in higher economic and social benefits (Bishu & Alkadry, 2017).

One successful model aiming to explain the psychological underpinnings of gender inequalities in the work domain is the lack of fit framework (Heilman, 2012). According to

this framework, gender discrimination emerges from stereotypic representations of men as agentic and competent – traits that are required to succeed in high-status positions – but lacking communality (e.g., concern for others and emotional sensitivity), and women as not particularly competent but warm and nurturing, and therefore more suited for responsibilities requiring empathy and caregiving (e.g., Abele & Wojciszke, 2018).

Besides describing what is thought to be typical of one gender (Hentschel et al., 2019), gender stereotypes also have a more strictly injunctive function, with people violating stereotypes encountering social punishment (e.g., Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Vink et al., 2022). For example, women should be communal (e.g., understanding, and motherly) and not dominant (e.g., tenacious, or angry), while men should be agentic (e.g., career-oriented, and strong) and not emotional (e.g., sensitive or soft; Prentice & Carranza, 2002; Rudman et al., 2012). Notably, because gender stereotypes present complementary strengths and weaknesses for men and women, they suggest that social inequity is due to inherent differences and thus justifiable (Eagly & Steffen, 1984; Glick & Fiske, 1997).

The pervasiveness of stereotypical representations of women as nurturing and more suited for housekeeping also helps explain why women still shoulder the majority of household chores and care responsibilities (e.g., Pailhé et al., 2021). Although nowadays many Western societies are characterized by a Dual-Earner Model, where both partners work full-time, we are still quite far from the ideal of a Dual Earner - Dual Carer Model, where both men and women contribute equally to both paid and unpaid work in their households (Trappe et al., 2015). This domestic imbalance can have negative consequences for women, such as increased stress and lower job satisfaction (Amato et al., 2007; Gutek et al., 1991) and may also limit their opportunities for education, career advancement, and social and economic equality (Bianchi et al., 2000; Milkie et al., 2002). Ultimately, these inequalities perpetuate a cycle of gender inequality, as women's domestic responsibilities may constrain

their ability to achieve parity with men in various spheres of life (Hill et al., 2001). Moreover, children growing up in households with imbalanced domestic duties may internalize gender stereotypes even more than others and develop gendered identities, hence perpetuating gender inequalities across generations (Bianchi & Milkie, 2010). Despite the evident issue of inequalities in the distribution of household chores, it is noteworthy that these imbalances often become so deeply ingrained that individuals may not even perceive them as unjust (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018).

Navigating Social Expectations and Tackling Harassment in a Patriarchal Society

Besides underpinning work and domestic inequalities, gender stereotypes influence people's expectations about how women should behave in every other aspect of life as well. With their prescriptive nature, gender stereotypes tangibly motivate individuals to adapt their behaviors and life choices to what seems appropriate to their gender group, and hence fully qualify as a fundamental aspect of gender inequalities (Ellemers, 2018; Ridgeway & Smith-Lovin, 1999). For instance, societal expectations prioritize motherhood, conveying the idea that childless women are incomplete or less fulfilled (e.g., Ashburn-Nardo, 2017; Hird & Abshoff, 2000). This can evoke guilt and inadequacy among women who choose not to have children or struggle to balance motherhood and their professional roles (Fiori et al., 2017; Kuipers et al., 2021). Additionally, women face pressure to conform to beauty standards, diverting resources from other life domains (Nelson & Brown, 2019) and hindering their pursuit of power and independence (Heflick & Goldenberg, 2009). Paradoxically, women, though often sexualized (Calogero, 2012; Fasoli et al., 2017), remain constrained in the expression of their sexuality, encountering stigmatization when they freely express and enjoy it (e.g., Conley et al., 2013). These pervasive societal pressures extend beyond domestic and work realms, perpetuating gender inequalities and significantly impacting women's well-being.

The unequal power dynamics between genders are vividly reflected in the pressing social issue of harassment faced by women (Krizsan et al., 2007). This encompasses not only physical violence but also sexual violence and psychological abuse, a range of threatening behaviors such as insults, manipulation, and intimidation aimed at reducing someone's freedom (Jordan et al., 2010). Because frequently unconscious and ambiguous in intentions, the latter type of harassment is often overlooked, hardly recognized, and sometimes justified, even by the victims themselves (Phillips et al., 2018). Yet, it is equally harmful, if not more so due to its pervasive nature (Jones et al., 2014). Take, for instance, the case of "catcalls," unsolicited comments and gestures predominantly directed at women by unfamiliar men in public spaces, often containing (semi-)explicit or implicit references to sexual acts or appearance. Cat-calling and other forms of stranger harassment happen daily (Fisher et al., 2019). They are linked to negative psychological outcomes, including anxiety and diminished perception of safety (e.g., Davidson et al., 2015; McCarty et al., 2014), and lead to behaviors underlining a limited sense of freedom, such as changing itineraries and avoiding going out after dusk (Fisher et al., 2019). Taken together, these findings not only highlight the prominence of harassment towards women, but also the physical, psychological, and social harm that comes with it, making it a significant part of women’s daily experience of gender inequalities.

Perceptions of Gender Inequalities

A theoretically grounded explanation of why it is important to understand women’s perception of gender inequalities stems from the Theory of Relative Deprivation (Runciman, 1966; Smith et al., 2012). Central to this theory is the notion of subjective assessment of one’s group status: it is not the objective difference in status between two groups that gives rise to relative deprivation, but rather the subjective appraisal of this discrepancy as unfair (Smith et al., 2012). When people compare their group to another, they may face a dissonance

between their group's desired outcomes and its actual outcomes and therefore conclude that they are not getting what they deserve (Wright & Tropp, 2002). In turn, these evaluations of group-based inequalities produce feelings about one's group social standing, such as anger and resentment (Runciman, 1966; Smith et al., 2012). A consistent body of research demonstrated that group-based relative deprivation is central in predicting intergroup-level attitudes and behaviors (e.g., Dambrun et al., 2006; Moscatelli et al., 2014) and support for social and political movements (for instance, through collective action; Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; Mazzuca et al., 2022; Thomas et al., 2020).

In the context of women's experiences, research found that higher perceptions of gender inequalities are associated with reduced life satisfaction (Kinias & Kim, 2012), and that more frequent experiences of gender inequalities are associated with psychological distress and reduced emotional well-being (Harryson et al., 2012; Klonoff et al., 2000; Landrine et al., 1995). Furthermore, higher perceptions of gender inequalities were associated with stronger support for governmental efforts to reduce gender inequality in Austria, West Germany, and Great Britain (however, this effect was not found in the US, possibly because their stronger individualistic culture may have pushed women to go after personal solutions; see Davis & Robinson, 1991). Despite not differentiating between different facets of inequality, these studies highlight the importance of examining the subjective experiences of gender inequality and their psychosocial reactions.

Yet, considering how gender inequalities take up many different forms, how perceptions of gender inequalities have been assessed seems limited in scope. In fact, many studies measure the perception of gender inequalities with a few quite general items, such as "How similar or different are women's and men's opportunities in life?" (e.g., Kinias & Kim, 2012). More frequently perceptions of gender inequalities are merely investigated from an economical or work-related point of view (e.g., Tougas & Veilleux, 1988) and more rarely in

other domains, such as the gendered division of household chores (e.g., Harryson et al., 2012) or personal experience of harassment (e.g., Johnson et al., 2017; Koss et al., 2007). This approach may fail to unravel the complexity of gender inequalities.

A novel approach to capture the heterogeneity of perceived gender inequalities was proposed by Corning (2000). Across a series of studies with university students, the author developed and validated the Perceived Social Inequity–Women's Form (PSIS-W), which measured women's personal experience of inequality and – although building up to an overall index – included six different factors, namely harassment/assault, managing multiple roles (ex. working mother), career competence, career encouragement, physical appearance, and lack of academic role models. However, Corning's scale was specifically designed for capturing the personal experience of group-based inequity (i.e., how much discrimination one faces as a woman) and not the individuals' cognitive perception of their group's disadvantage (i.e., how much discrimination one, as a woman, thinks women face). Similarly, the Schedule of Sexist Events (Bowleg et al., 2008; Klonoff & Landrine, 1995) was conceived to measure women's personal frequency of experience of sexist discrimination around four dimensions (sexist degradation, sexism in distant relationships, sexism in close relationships, and sexist discrimination in the workplace) rather than their perception of inequalities as members of a disadvantaged group. Thus, while the mentioned studies bring initial evidence to the importance of capturing different nuances of gender inequalities (Bowleg et al., 2008; Corning, 2000; Klonoff & Landrine, 1995), to our knowledge, there has been limited attention given to women's subjective perceptions of gender inequalities at a group-level.

The Current Research

Tackling the shortcomings emerging from previous research on perceptions of gender inequalities, this research aims to develop and validate the Multidimensional Gender Inequalities Perception Inventory – Women's Form (MGIPI-W) across a qualitative pilot test

and five correlational studies. Specifically, the studies assessed women's perceptions around their subjective appraisal of belonging to a group that receives different treatments across multiple domains and examined how each component is associated with other psychological outcomes. It is important to note that the MGIPI-W aims to gauge women's perspectives on gender inequalities, and not the extent to which they are perceived as legitimate or illegitimate. While the perception of inequality and the evaluation of such inequality in terms of legitimacy are likely to be interconnected, they are distinct constructs, with the former referring to the recognition of disparities between two groups, and the latter to the subjective belief that such inequalities are justifiable or rightful (Jetten et al., 2017). In line with social identity theorizing (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), people may, in fact, perceive intergroup inequalities without thinking that they are unfair.

All studies were approved by the Bio-Ethical Committee of the first author's institution prior to data collection.

Pilot Study

To develop and choose items for the inventory, we utilized a three-part strategy. Firstly, we conducted a review of the literature and examined publicly available statistics related to gender inequalities in Europe and Italy. Secondly, we held a focus group with several women in which we asked them about their own experiences and perceptions of gender inequalities, and thirdly, a team of experts in social psychology discussed and finalized the items. The objective was to identify items that would capture gender inequalities that seem likely to be commonly perceived by women in everyday life.

Based on the literature review, we identified three primary domains: disparities in the domestic domain, inequalities in the workplace, and harassment towards women. Other areas

of disadvantage that emerged were related to sexualization, beauty standards, and parental and social expectations in general.

As for the focus group, we asked eight laywomen to discuss their life experiences of gender inequalities. In particular, participants were asked about whether or not they thought that gender inequalities affecting women existed, where women experienced such inequalities, what understanding of such inequalities they developed through the women around them, and whether and how they personally experienced gender inequality. They were recruited from the first author's professional and personal network and their mean age was 32.38 (age range 21 – 50). The focus group was held remotely, due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions as well as to allow the participation of women with different geographical and social backgrounds. Participants did not know each other, lived in different Italian cities, reported different sexual orientations (6 straight, 1 bisexual, and 1 pansexual), and were in different relational configurations: single (1), in a relationship (2), married (1), and divorced (3), with a new relationship (1) or not (2). The differences in their background and life experiences enriched the discussion providing an opportunity to highlight similarities and diversities in their experiences. We recorded their inputs and discussion and found that they broadly captured the following themes: disproportionate division of household chores (e.g., "I hate that my mum always had to take care of the house, while my dad just wouldn't") and involvement in childcare (e.g., "I always invested more than my husband in parenting our kids"); workplace inequalities (e.g., "although I teach in a school where the majority of employees are women, the headmasters are always men"); catcalling and sexualization of women (e.g., "I cannot tell you how many times a man made sexual comments to me on the streets"); and anticipated social punishment (e.g., "When I am trying a nice outfit on, I think of the offensive things that others are going to think or say of me, like that, I want to be provocative or seductive"). The themes that appeared in the pilot study aligned with the

topics we individuated through the literature review and were particularly useful in shaping the content of the items and their specific wording. Last, the team of experts judged the face validity of the items and made a first selection. From this multi-phasic approach, we generated an item pool of 27 items.

Study 1

In Study 1, we administered the items generated and refined through the literature review and the focus group to a general sample of women living in Italy. The study aimed to select the best items and test their structure by means of exploratory factor analysis.

Method

The sample size for this study, as well as for the following studies, was based on the minimum item–participant ratio recommendations of three to six observations per item in the factor analysis (Cattell, 1978). Data were collected from December 2020 to March 2021. In this study, we recruited 887 Italian female participants through personal contacts and free advertisements on social media from the general population. From this initial sample, we eliminated participants who failed to complete the MGIPI-W items (n = 163), those who failed the attention check (n = 17), and those who did not disclose their gender (n = 4). The final sample was made of 703 women (M_{age} = 46.57, SD = 13.29; age ranged from 18–74). Demographic information for all studies can be found in Supplementary Materials.

After giving informed consent, participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with our pool of 27 items and reported demographic information (age, nationality, gender, and sexual orientation). To ensure that we measured participants' perceptions of gender inequalities and not their personal beliefs around those issues, our items followed these instructions: "Indicate whether you believe each statement describes occurrences in your society. For instance, choose "strongly disagree" if you perceive the item reflects a

phenomenon that does not occur at all in your society, and "strongly agree" if you believe it describes a prevalent phenomenon. Your responses should reflect your beliefs about these statements' applicability to your society, not your personal views around these issues or whether or not you think they are fair". In total, the whole questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes to be completed.

Results and Discussion

Before conducting an exploratory factor analysis on the item pool, assumptions and descriptive statistics were checked. Since a graphical examination revealed that most item distributions were not canonically normal, we applied the Principal Axis Factoring model, which makes no distributional assumption and is robust against deviations from normality (Fabrigar et al., 1999). Supposing that the factors would be correlated, we applied an oblique rotation (the Promax rotation), generally recommended because it begins with an orthogonal rotation but then removes the orthogonality constraints leaving factors free to correlate (Grieder & Steiner, 2022). Kaiser–Meyer–Olkin (KMO = .96) measure of sampling adequacy test and Bartlett test of sphericity, with χ^2 (351) = 7903.50 and $p < .001$. demonstrated that the data were suitable for factor analysis. Correlations showed no evidence of multicollinearity, with $.116 < r < .541$ and the determinant value equal to $1.099^{\text{e-5}}$.

The factor extraction, based on Kaiser's criterion (1960), displayed 4 factors, explaining 52.91% of the variance. The first factor seemed to capture several social expectations directed at women; the second revolved around inequalities taking place in the workplace. The third factor seemed to capture home-based issues of gender inequalities. Finally, the last factor revolved around harassment towards women.

We excluded 5 items with a cross-loading larger than .30 and repeated the same analysis. At this point, we had a clear factor structure, but the first factor retained 11 items,

while the second and fourth had 4 items each and the third had 3 items. To balance out the number of items in the first factor to the others without losing meaningful content covered by these items, we decided to revisit its structure, by examining both the statistics and the content of the items loading onto the first factor. Statistically, we decided to retain only the best loading factors (factor-loading greater than .60). We also dropped one item on sexual social expectations ("Differently from a man, a woman who maintains an active sexual life without a stable relationship is seen as someone who is 'no-good'") which seemed redundant because covered by another item with a higher loading and a clearer phrasing ("A woman who initiates sexual activities is seen as being sexually promiscuous"). Last, we repeated the same analysis with fewer items imposing the extraction of four factors (Table 2-12-1).

Final model statistics

In the final model, 5 items loaded on the first factor capturing *Social Expectations* (*M* = 4.71; *SD* = 1.20; *eigenvalue* 6.37; α = .80), accounting for 39.81% of the total variance. This factor captured expectations about women's sexual life, women's clothing, women's maternity, and women's involvement in the raising of their children.

Four items loaded on the second factor capturing *Workplace Inequalities* (*M* = 5.79; *SD* = 0.92; *eigenvalue* 1.30; α = .80), accounting for 8.07% of the total variance. The items loading on this factor tapped on the increased difficulties and the reduced possibilities that women face for being hired compared to men, the higher risk of being fired in times of crisis, and the penalty that mothers but not fathers receive when going back to work after the birth of a child.

Table 2-1.

Items included in the final scale, with descriptive statistics and associated factor loading statistics.

Item	Mean	SD	Factor			
			1	*2*	*3*	*4*
1. A woman who is too outgoing is often labeled as somewhat of a bimbo.	4.67	1.62	.73			
2. A woman who dresses in trackies and hoodie is considered by others to be neglecting herself.	4.72	1.54	.62			
3. A woman who initiates sexual activities is seen as being sexually promiscuous.	5.04	1.51	.62			
4. Women without children are seen as being worse people, than men without children.	4.78	1.70	.60			
5. After having a child, a woman is expected to stay home and take care of the child until they are old enough to care for themselves.	4.32	1.72	.58			
6. All other things being equal, women encounter more difficulties in establishing a career than men do.	5.98	1.03		.75		
7. When seeking employment, women are less likely to be hired than a man who has the same credentials.	5.50	1.27		.71		
8. In times of crisis, women are more likely to lose their jobs than men.	5.77	1.24		.70		
9. After having a child, women experience greater negative outcomes at work than men do.	5.92	1.10		.55		
10. Typically, it is women who clean the house.	5.56	1.34			.87	
11. Typically, women are responsible for washing and ironing clothes for others in the house.	5.83	1.20			.81	
12. Often, the "mental burden" of running a home and caring for a family is the responsibility of women.	5.91	1.12			.36	
13. Compared to a man, a woman is more likely to receive sexual advances at a job interview or in the workplace.	5.58	1.19				.71
14. A woman's clothing choice is commented on more often than a man's clothing choice.	6.09	1.03				.64
15. Women are often subjected to unwelcome sexual jokes.	5.76	1.19				.57
16. At night, it is more dangerous for a woman to walk alone than for a man to walk alone.	6.31	0.90				.39

Note: Factor 1 = Social Expectations; Factor 2 = Work Inequalities; Factor 3 = Domestic Imbalance; 4 = Harassment towards Women.

Three items loaded on the third factor capturing *Domestic Imbalance* (*M* = 5.77; *SD* = 1.02; *eigenvalue* 1.13; α = .77), accounting for 7.07% of the total variance. This factor captured the more time-consuming duties that women typically take care of within their households, such as cleaning the house, doing laundry and, more generally, doing the organizing, the planning, and the actual tasks to maintain a household.

Four items loaded on the fourth factor capturing *Harassment towards Women* (*M* = 5.93; *SD* = 0.81; *eigenvalue* .96; α = .74), accounting for 5.99% of the total variance. The items loaded on this factor refer to the different shades of harassment that are typically directed at women, from verbal comments on their appearance or sexually explicit comments to workplace sexual harassment and to the higher risk for women to go out at night by themselves.

Study 2

The exploratory factor analysis in Study 1 revealed a four-factor solution, namely Domestic Imbalance, Workplace Inequalities, Harassment towards Women, and Social Expectations. Hence, in Study 2 we aimed to replicate this structure in a different sample, namely that of university students. In fact, finding consistent findings across significantly distinct samples would prove that the four-factor solution is both robust (Onwuegbuzie, 2000; see also Sudkämper et al., 2020) and externally valid, as suggested by Winer's (1999) guidelines.

Method

Data collection for this study occurred between March and June 2021. In total, we recruited 671 female participants who were enrolled in some form of tertiary education at the first author’s institution. From these, we excluded 2 people who did not give their informed consent, 106 people who failed to fill in the MGIPI-W measure, and 1 person who identified

as a man. Furthermore, we excluded those participants who failed the attention checks (*n* =12). Thus, the final sample was made up of 550 participants (M_{age} = 22.94, *SD* = 4.34, age ranged from 18–57). Among them, 4 people (.73%) identified as non-binary but were kept in the final sample since they were socialized as women.

In terms of university major, the sample was fairly diversified: the larger groups were humanities students (*n* = 72, 13.1%), psychology students (*n* = 72, 13.1%), engineering students (*n* = 70, 12.7%) and medicine students (*n* = 53, 9.7%), but there also were students of other disciplines, from pharmacy (*n* = 24, 4.4%) and sciences (*n* = 19, 3.5%) to sociology (*n* = 39, 7.1%), economics (*n* = 11, 2%) and political sciences (*n* = 10, 1.8%), 149 did not answer this question (27.1%). Of all these students, 227 (41.3%) were currently enrolled in a bachelor program, 165 (30%) in master programs, 3 (.5%) were PhD students, 6 (1.1%) were doing other types of education (specialization, etc) and 149 (27.1%) did not answer this question.

After giving informed consent, participants were presented with the measure of perception of gender inequalities and last some demographic questions, such as age, nationality, and sexual orientation. Overall, the full questionnaire required approximately 20 minutes to be completed.

Results and Discussion

We validated the factor structure of our scale by means of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), run with the statistical software Mplus 8.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2019). We loaded the 16 items onto the four factors in line with the structure that emerged from the EFA in Study 1.

The specified model fitted the data fairly well, with χ^2 (98) = 348.51, $p < .001$, *CFI* = .917, *RMSEA* = .07 (*CI*: .06, .08), *SRMR* = .08, and the Akaike Information Criteria for comparing models *AIC* = 25931.97. Yet, as the 4 factors were theoretically related and

statistically found to correlate in Study 1, we specified a second model where the latent factors would correlate. Besides, consulting the modification indices and noticing an equivalent grammatical structure in two items ("Typically, it is women who clean the house" and "Typically, women are responsible for washing and ironing clothes for others in the house"), we also specified a correlation between these two. This latter model fitted the data even better, as shown by the excellent fit indices, with χ^2 (97) = 230.65, $p < .001$, *CFI* = .956, *RMSEA* = .05 (*CI*: .04, .06), *SRMR* = .04, and a smaller value for the comparative fit index, *AIC*= 25816.11.

The Cronbach's alphas for the 4 factors were acceptable: *Domestic Imbalance* (*M* = 5.68; *SD* = 1.09; α = .75), *Workplace Inequalities* (*M* = 5.82; *SD* = 0.97; α = .82), *Harassment towards Women* (*M* = 6.40; *SD* = 0.69; α = .80) and *Social Expectations* (*M* = 5.29; *SD* = 1.08; α = .75). All bivariate correlations between these factors were significant and positive, with $.39 < r < .60$, supporting that they are somewhat interrelated but different enough to justify their distinctions.

Study 3

Study 3 aimed to provide further evidence of the robustness of the MGIPI-W by replicating the factor structure in another sample and by establishing its concurrent, predictive, and discriminant validity. To test for convergent validity, the instrument under consideration needs to be strongly related to a second instrument measuring a virtually equivalent or very similar construct (Hogan, 2019). We expected all four factors to be positively correlated with Tougas and Veilleux's measure of perceptions of workplace gender inequality (1988). However, given the specific focus of Tougas and Veilleux's measure, we expected the latter to have the strongest correlation with the MGIPI-W subscale of *Workplace Inequalities*.

Predictive validity is commonly defined as the degree to which responses to a certain instrument predict a criterion variable that measures a related outcome (Hogan, 2019). To test for predictive validity, we analyzed whether the MGIPI-W was related to two group-based emotions (anger and disdain) and to participants' reported experience of sexism. Additionally, we examined whether the various dimensions of MGIPI-W worked as distinct predictors for the three variables under consideration, namely, emotions and experience of sexism.

Perceptions of group-based inequalities have been positively linked to group-based emotions, such as anger and resentment (Smith et al., 2012). Thus, we expected the MGIPI-W to be positively associated with the emotions under consideration. Since being aware of the existence of group-based discrimination is usually related to individuals' higher ability to recognize when they experience discrimination (e.g., Ruggiero & Taylor, 1995; Stroebe et al., 2010), we expected that the more participants perceived gender inequalities, the more experience of sexism they would report.

Discriminant validity is what ensures that a test measures what it is intended to measure, by proving that it is not related to another psychological construct that it should not be related to (Hogan, 2019). In this study, we looked at the association between the perception of gender inequalities and anxiety related to COVID-19, expecting very weak or no connection between our four factors and COVID-19 anxiety.

Method

Participants and procedure

We recruited 149 female participants from employees of a large organization in spring 2021. From these, we excluded two participants who preferred not to declare their gender and 15 participants who failed more than one out of three attention checks. The final sample was made up of 132 participants (M_{age} = 50.27, SD = 7.98, age ranged between 29–62), who identified as women. A sensitivity analysis was conducted with G*Power (Faul et al., 2007)

and indicated that the final sample was sufficient to detect small to medium effects of $f^2 = .06$, assuming an $\alpha = .05$, and power of .80 for multiple linear regressions with four predictors (Cohen, 2013).

Except for 6 participants who did not answer this question (4.55%), they all said to be of Italian nationality ($n = 127$; 95.45%). After giving their informed consent, participants were presented with measures of perceptions of inequalities, emotions, experience of sexism, concern with COVID-19, and lastly, some demographics. Blocks of questions were not randomized, but items within each block were. The questionnaire took approximately 20 minutes to be filled.

Measures

Perceptions of gender inequalities were measured as in Study 2. All the subscales exhibited acceptable reliability levels (*Domestic Imbalance*, with α = .82, *Workplace Inequalities*, with α = .81, *Harassment towards Women*, with α = .74 and *Social Expectations*, with α = .73).

The measure of perception of workplace inequality (Tougas & Veilleux, 1988) was made up of three items (e.g., "I think that women and men have different chances of being promoted at work"; 1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*; α = .82).

Group-based emotions were measured by asking participants "When thinking about inequalities between men and women, how much do you feel the following emotions?" for anger and disdain (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*).

To measure participants' reported experience of sexism, we included the Schedule of Sexist Events Modified (SSE-LM; Bowleg et al., 2008). This measure comprises 13 items about women's lifetime experiences of sexism in a variety of domains, from the work environment to the family context (α =.89). An example item is "As a woman, how often

have you been treated unfairly by your co-workers or fellow students?". Participants had to indicate to which frequency each instance of sexism had occurred in their life, from 1 (*never*) to 7 (*all the time*).

Finally, the Covid Concern Questionnaire (Conway et al., 2020) included 6 items (e.g., "I am afraid of the coronavirus"; 1 = *not at all*, 7 = *very much*; α = .83).

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Confirmatory Factor Analysis

All descriptive statistics and correlations among measures are presented in Table 2-2. First, as in Study 2, we run a CFA allowing correlations among the latent factors and the two similarly worded items. The results provided further evidence for the four-factor model identified in the two previous studies, with very good fit indices, χ^2 (97) = 159.34, $p < .001$, *CFI* = .925, *RMSEA* = .07 (*CI*: .05, .09), *SRMR* = .06.

Table 2-2.

Descriptive statistics and correlations between Study 3 variables.

Variable	*Mean*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Domestic Imbalance	5.72	1.02								
2. Work Inequalities	5.76	0.95	.56***							
3. Harassment toward Women	5.78	0.82	.58***	.70***						
4. Social Expectations	4.53	1.11	.53***	.54***	.59***					
5. Perception of Workplace Inequality	5.70	0.96	.47***	.76***	.64***	.41***				
6. Experience of Sexism	4.85	2.22	.20*	.42***	.43***	.45***	.44***			
7. Anger	5.01	1.50	.25**	.43***	.40***	.29**	.37***	.27**		
8. Disdain	5.24	1.49	.23**	.49***	.44***	.27**	.44***	.21*	.55***	
9. Covid Anxiety	4.44	1.05	.03	.03	.15	.22*	-.02	.19*	.04	.06

Note. ***p < .001, **p < .01, *p < .05

Convergent Validity

As hypothesized, correlations between Tougas and Veilleux's (1988) measure of perception of workplace inequality and each MGIPI-W subscale were significant and positive. The Workplace Inequalities subscale had the strongest correlation, whereas the Social Expectations had the weakest one. These results represent evidence of good convergent validity (Hogan, 2019).

Predictive Validity

To test for predictive validity, we first analyzed all bivariate correlations between the MGIPI-W subscales, the group-based emotions, and the experience of sexism. Supporting our hypotheses, all MGIPI-W dimensions were significantly and positively associated with higher anger, disdain, and reported experiences of sexism. We then computed a series of multiple linear regression models with the four subscales as predictors and anger, disdain, and experience with sexism as outcome variables.

As for anger, the regression model was significant, $R^2 = .18$, $F\ (4, 127) = 8.13$, $p < .001$, showing that, collectively, the four subscales accounted for 18% of the variance of anger. Looking at the unique contribution of each factor, results show that Workplace Inequalities positively predicted anger, with $b = .47$, $p = .012$.

When analyzing the same model on disdain, we obtained a significant model in which the four subscales accounted for 25% of the variance, with $R^2 = .25$, $F\ (4, 127) = 11.72$, $p < .001$. Workplace Inequalities ($b = .62$, $p = .001$) and Harassment ($b = .45$, $p = .034$) both had a unique and positive contribution to disdain.

Turning to experience with sexism, the multiple regression model was significant and accounted for 26% of the total variance, with $R^2 = .26$, $F\ (4, 127) = 12.29$, $p < .001$. In terms of unique contributions, Social Expectations ($b = .25$, $p = .002$) and Workplace Inequalities (b

= .21, p = .044) positively predicted experience with sexism, while Domestic Imbalance (b = -.18, p = .035) was a negative predictor. Yet, it should be noted that the bivariate correlation between Domestic Imbalance and experience with sexism was positive, implying that the negative relationship observed in the regression analysis is due to the partialling out of the other dimensions. Taken together, these findings showed that the MGIPI-W has good predictive validity.

Discriminant Validity

Supporting discriminant validity, the MGIPI-W subscales of Domestic Imbalance, Workplace Inequalities, and Harassment towards Women were not related to covid anxiety. Unexpectedly, the correlation between the subscale of Social Expectations and covid anxiety was significant, but not large (r = .22, p = .010). Following Sudkämper et al. (2020), we looked further into the correlations of each item composing this factor. Two items had no significant correlations, two items in the .10s and one in the .20s. Hence, the overall correlation between Social Expectations and covid anxiety can be explained by an aggregation of several weak relationships, which do not harm the discriminant validity of MGIPI-W.

To sum up, besides supporting that the four-factor model of perceptions of gender inequalities fit the data very well, the findings of Study 3 provided evidence for the convergent, predictive, and discrimination validity of the newly developed instrument. Perceiving workplace gender inequalities played a more prominent role than the other MGIPI-W dimensions, especially with respect to Tougas and Veilleux's (1988) measure of perceived inequalities as well as the group-based emotions of anger and disdain. Thus, we run a further study to provide more evidence of how different perceptions of gender inequality can work as predictors of different outcomes, including outcomes less related to the work domain.

Study 4

While Study 3 highlighted the primary role played by workplace inequalities in predicting the outcome variables considered so far, it is important to uncover whether different aspects of gender inequality play distinct roles depending on the domain being considered. In other words, it may be the case that when considering outcomes that are conceptually further away from the work domain, other dimensions of our scale may be more relevant. To this aim, Study 4 analyzed the relationships between perceiving inequalities, support for affirmative action policies, and attitudes toward women's sexual lives.

Within the domain of economic inequality, affirmative action for gender includes policies and programs that aim to promote equal opportunities for women by providing preferential treatment to address past discrimination and increase representation (Krings et al., 2007). Individuals who perceive gender inequalities in the workplace tend to support policies promoting gender equality more (e.g., Crosby et al., 2003; Lips, 2003). Hence, we hypothesized that perception of workplace inequalities would be the main predictor of support for affirmative action policies, compared to the other dimensions of gender inequalities (hypothesis 1).

On a completely different life domain, that is that of sexuality, women are often targets of negative attitudes (e.g., Conley & Klein, 2022). Studies on sexual double standards pointed out that traditional beliefs maintain greater approval of sexual freedom for men than women (Endendijk et al., 2020). Notably, holding such traditional views ultimately reinforces norms that constrain women's behaviors (e.g., Conley et al., 2013). Because, in general terms, research established that perceiving inequality is a fundamental antecedent of support for social change (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021), it seems plausible to expect that higher perceptions of women's disadvantaged stand lead women to hold more liberal ideas about specific domains of gender inequalities too, such as women's sexual freedom, and that this effect would be driven by perceptions of gender inequalities in the domain of social

expectations. Therefore, perception of social expectations should be the strongest predictor of more favorable attitudes towards women's sexual freedom compared to the other dimensions of gender inequalities (hypothesis 2).

Method

Participants and procedure

For this study, data were collected in spring 2021. The initial sample was made up of 104 women working in a public organization in Italy, who were invited to take part in an online survey. Yet, non-heterosexual participants (n = 8) were excluded to ensure alignment with the focus of the employed measure of attitudes towards women's sexuality (the Sexual Freedom for Women subscale from the Sexual Double Standards Scale; Sierra et al., 2018), which specifically addresses opinions on women's sexuality in heterosexual contexts and to maintain methodological consistency with the original study. Thus, the final sample included 96 women (M_{age} = 50.40, SD_{age} = 8.23). We performed a sensitivity analysis on G*Power (Faul et al., 2007), which showed that our sample was sufficient to reveal small to medium effects of f^2 = .08, assuming an α = .05, and power of .80 for a multiple linear regression with four predictors (Cohen, 2013).

Measures

For all measures, participants were required to rate their level of agreement on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*; 7 = *strongly agree*). We measured perceptions of gender inequalities by using the 16 MGIPI-W items. All subscales had acceptable reliability indices: Domestic Imbalance (α = .81), Workplace Inequalities (α = .80), Harassment towards Women (α = .69), and Social Expectations (α = .75).

Support for affirmative action policies was measured by asking participants to indicate how favorable they were to four policies, namely "reserving quotas for women in

organizations", "providing company incentives for the hiring of a woman (e.g., in the form of a bonus)" "preferential selection of women with the same qualifications as men in public organizations;" "reserving quotas for women in political elections" (taken from Krings et al., 2007; α = .85).

To assess participants' attitudes toward women's sexual freedom, we used the subscale Sexual Freedom for Women, from the abridged version of the Sexual Double Standards Scale (SDSS; Sierra et al., 2018), comprising 4 items. An example item is "It's okay for a woman to have more than one sexual relationship at the same time" (α = .67).

Results

Table 2-3 shows bivariate correlations between all variables in Study 4. The strongest correlations were those between work inequalities and support for affirmative action policies, and between social expectations and attitudes towards women's sexual freedom.

Table 2-3.

Descriptive statistics and correlations for variables in Study 4.

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5
1. Domestic Imbalance	5.72	1.04					
2. Work Inequalities	5.75	0.89	.40***				
3. Harassment towards Women	5.88	0.78	.62***	.45***			
4. Social Expectations	4.47	1.16	.45***	.36***	.60***		
5. Support for Affirmative Actions	4.84	1.34	.27**	.37***	.27**	.25*	
6. Attitudes towards Women's Sexual Freedom	3.74	1.19	.20	.17	.28**	.33**	.01

Note. ***p < .01, **p < .01, *p < .05

To explain which component of perceptions of gender inequalities drive these effects, we computed two separate multiple linear regression models for support for affirmative

action policies and attitudes towards women's sexual freedom. The model on support for affirmative action policies was significant and accounted for 13% of the total variance, with $R^2 = .13$, $F\ (1, 94) = 14.87$, $p = .001$. In terms of unique contributions, only perceptions of Workplace Inequalities ($b = .56$, $p < .001$) were significant, thus supporting hypothesis 1.

The regression model on attitudes towards women's sexual freedom was also significant, accounting for 10% of the total variance, $R^2 = .10$, $F\ (1, 94) = 11.25$, $p = .001$, with only perceptions of Social Expectations being significantly associated with the outcome ($b = .34$, $p = .001$), thus supporting hypothesis 2. Taken together, the results add evidence to the contentions that different perceptions of gender inequalities can lead to different outcomes and that it is important to differentiate between different aspects of inequality.

Study 5

While Studies 1 to 4 provided evidence of the convergent, predictive, and discriminant validity of the MGIPI-W in Italian samples, Study 5 aimed to evaluate its suitability in a distinct cultural setting and an English-speaking context, namely the UK. Additionally, Study 5 undertook two further aims: a) to test the incremental validity of the MGIPI-W over and above a conventional unidimensional approach in predicting group-level outcomes (the emotions of anger, disdain, and resignation, and negative attitudes toward men), and b) comparing the predictive validity of the MGIPI-W and a measure of personal experience of sexism (Bowleg et al., 2008) in predicting the same four group-level outcomes and two individual-level outcomes (depression and negative affect, representing two indicators of well-being).

Because most measures of perceptions of gender inequalities focus on the workplace (e.g., Lausi et al., 2021; Mazzuca et al., 2022), and considering that Study 3 demonstrated the MGIPI-W convergent validity with Tougas and Veilleux's (1998) measure of workplace

inequalities, we tested the incremental validity of the domestic imbalance, harassment towards women and social expectations subscales compared to the workplace subscale (intended as a unidimensional measure) in predicting the four group-level outcomes.

Specifically, to understand various emotional reactions to distinct aspects of gender inequalities, we considered, anger and disdain (like in Study 3), which are powerful drivers of behaviors aimed at improving the situation (e.g., Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021) and we also assessed resignation, linked to passive avoidance and withdrawal (Osborne et al., 2012; Smith & Pettigrew, 2014). As a further group-level variable, we considered negative attitudes toward men – as captured by the hostility component of the Ambivalence toward Men Inventory (AMI; Glick & Fiske, 1999) – which specifically expresses women's resentment toward men's domination within intimate relationships. While perceiving gender inequality should, in general terms, be associated with higher levels of group-based emotions and hostility toward the privileged group (i.e., men; e.g., Smith et al., 2012), we expected that adding the other three subscales as predictors would significantly improve the prediction model compared to a model with perceptions of work inequalities as the unique predictor.

Finally, we expected that the MGIPI-W would work as a significant predictor of the same four group-level outcomes over and above the personal experience of sexism (Bowleg et al., 2008), showing evidence of its incremental validity. In contrast, we expected that the MGIPI-W would not show any incremental validity over and above personal experience of sexism in predicting well-being – an individual-level outcome that is known to be related to perceived gender discrimination (e.g., Barlow et al., 2021; Klonoff et al., 2000; Landrine et al., 1995).

Method

Participants and procedure

We recruited 201 women participants from the UK through Prolific in October 2023. Participants were compensated for their participation at a rate of £9/hour. They all identified as women, and nobody failed more than one attention check out of three, so we kept all participants in the final sample.

The final sample was thus made up of 201 participants from the UK (M_{age} = 41.24, *SD* = 13.16, age ranged from 18–76). A sensitivity analysis conducted on G*Power (Faul et al., 2007) indicated the adequacy of the final sample to detect small effects of f^2 = .04, given an α = .05, and power of .80 for multiple linear regressions with five predictors (Cohen, 2013).

After the informed consent, the questionnaire included the MGIPI-W and measures of emotions, experience of sexism, depression, negative affect, hostility towards men, and a few sociodemographic questions. The questionnaire took approximately 7 minutes to be completed (see Supplementary Materials).

Measures

Unless specified, all answers were provided on a 7-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". All the MGIPI-W subscales displayed satisfactory reliability levels (*Domestic Imbalance*, with α = .80, *Workplace Inequalities*, with α = .75, *Harassment towards Women*, with α = .72, and *Social Expectations*, with α = .78). Since one might argue that the items included in the subscale of social expectations, which do not explicitly imply a comparison with men, could be interpreted as independent of gender considerations, participants were then presented again with all the social expectations items and asked whether those statements overall applied more to men or women (1 = *more to men*; 7 = *more to women*). Results, reported in Supplementary materials, supported that these items were perceived as tapping into women's experience.

The group-based emotions of anger, disdain, and resignation were measured by asking participants "When thinking about inequalities between men and women, how much do you

feel the following emotions?" and having each of the three emotions listed below (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*). Experience of sexism was measured as in Study 3 (SSE-LM; Bowleg et al., 2008; α =.92). Depression was measured through the 7-item Depression subscale of the Depression Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995; α =.94) – with answers from 1 (*Does not apply to me at all*) to 4 (*Applies to me very much or most of the time*). Negative Affect was measured through 3-item of the corresponding subscale of the Affect Valuation Index (Tsai et al., 2006; α =.93). Hostility towards men was measured by including the Hostile Sexism subscale of the Ambivalent Sexism towards men (Rollero et al., 2014), composed of three items ("Men will always fight for greater control in society"; α =.66).

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among measures are shown in Table 2-4. First, as in the previous studies, we run a CFA allowing correlations among the latent factors and the two similarly worded items on the statistical program Mplus 8.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2019). The results of the model exhibited excellent fit indices, χ^2 (97) = 127.68, p = 0.020, *CFI* = .971, *CFI* = .964 *RMSEA* = .04 (*CI*: .02, .06), *SRMR* = .05, supporting the robustness of the four-factor solution, even in a different social and cultural context.

A Multidimensional Measure Works Better Than A Unidimensional Measure.

To test the incremental validity of the MGIPI-W, we ran a series of hierarchical regression analyses (Haynes & Lench, 2003). First, we tested whether using the MGIPI-W over a unidimensional measure of perception of workplace inequality proved useful. In Model 1, we entered the MGIPI-W subscale of Workplace Inequality only; in Model 2, we added the three other subscales of Domestic Imbalance, Harassment towards Women, and Social Expectations.

Table 2-4.

Descriptive statistics and correlations between variables in Study 5.

Variable	*Mean*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Domestic Imbalance	5.75	1.05										
2. Workplace Inequalities	5.26	0.97	.58***									
3. Harassment towards Women	6.05	0.78	.43***	.57***								
4. Social Expectations	4.68	1.15	.45***	.58***	.55**							
5. Anger	4.40	1.84	.24**	.45***	.41**	.39**						
6. Disdain	4.07	1.75	.20**	.43***	.40**	.40**	.76**					
7. Resignation	3.50	1.72	.32***	.30***	.22**	.33**	.42**	.42**				
8. Hostility towards Men	5.00	1.03	.42**	.45***	.32**	.35**	.27**	.25**	.26**			
9. Experience of Sexism	2.93	1.09	.26***	.46**	.49**	.58**	.47**	.44**	.29**	.27**		
10. Depression	1.78	0.73	.14	.15*	.21**	.23**	.21**	.20**	.27**	.23**	.33**	
11. Negative Affect	3.10	1.72	.18*	.17*	.18*	.25**	.22**	.21**	.31**	.28**	.32**	.82**

Note. ***p < .01, **p < .01, *p < .05

For each outcome considered, Model 1 was significant, and perceptions of workplace inequalities were always found to be a significant and positive predictor of anger, disdain, resignation, and hostility toward men (see Table 2-5). In support of our hypothesis, for each of these outcomes Model 2 – with all four subscales as predictors – showed significant improvement in the predictive power, as indicated by significant ΔF and positive ΔR^2 (see Table 2-5).

Table 2-5.

Unstandardized regression coefficients, F tests, and R^2 of the first set of hierarchical regressions.

	Anger	Disdain	Resignation	Hostility towards men
Model 1				
Intercept	-0.04	-0.04	0.69	2.47**
Workplace Inequalities	0.85**	0.78**	0.54**	0.48**
R^2_{adj}	0.19	0.18	0.09	0.2
F (df = 1, 199)	49.01**	45.96**	19.68**	51.17**
Model 2				
Intercept	-1.55	-1.32	-0.17	1.73**
Workplace Inequalities	0.57**	0.53**	0.16	0.27**
Domestic Imbalance	-0.15	-0.22	0.30*	0.22**
Harassment towards Women	0.45*	0.43*	-0.05	0.04
Social Expectations	0.23	0.28*	.31*	0.08
R^2_{adj}	0.23	0.24	0.13	0.24
ΔR^2	0.05	0.06	0.06	0.05
F (df = 4, 196)	16.13**	16.44**	8.38**	16.35**
ΔF (df = 3. 196)	4.34 **	5.55**	4.29**	3.98**

Note. **p < .01, *p < .05

Anger was significantly and positively predicted by perceptions of workplace inequalities and harassment towards women. Disdain was significantly and positively predicted by perceptions of workplace inequalities, harassment towards women, and social expectations. Resignation was no longer predicted by workplace inequalities, but rather it was positively predicted by domestic imbalance and social expectations. Last, hostility towards men was predicted by higher perceptions of domestic imbalance and workplace inequalities.

All in all, these results showed that for each outcome variable considered, using a multidimensional measure instead of a unidimensional one not only improved the explained variance of the outcome variable, but it allowed us to disentangle how different dimensions of perceived gender inequalities hold specific relationships with different outcomes.

Differentiating Perceptions of Group-Based Inequality and Personal Experience of Group-Based Inequality

In order to differentiate the scope and the predictive power of the MGIPI-W and the measure of experience of sexism, we ran a series of hierarchical regression analyses, where the measure of experience of sexism was entered in Model 1, and the four MGIPI-W subscales were added in Model 2. Both group-level (group-based emotions and hostility toward men) and individual-level (depression and negative affect) outcomes were considered.

Group-level outcomes.

As for group-level outcomes, namely anger, disdain, resignation, and hostility towards men, we expected the MGIPI-W to increase the predictive power of the model and to explain further variance above and beyond what is explained by the measure of experience of sexism. For each outcome, Model 1 was significant, with experience of sexism acting as a significant predictor (see Table 2-6). Supporting our hypothesis, Model 2, featuring the measure of experience of sexism and all the MGIPI-W subscales, exhibited a significant improvement in

predictive power and uncovered more nuanced associations. Both anger and disdain were significantly and positively predicted by both experience of sexism and perceptions of workplace inequalities. Resignation was no longer predicted by experience of sexism, while it was significantly predicted by higher perceptions of domestic imbalance. As for hostility towards men, the experience of sexism was no longer a significant predictor in Model 2, while higher perceptions of workplace inequalities and domestic imbalance were associated with increased hostility towards men.

Individual-level outcomes.

We expected that when depression and negative affect were considered as outcome variables, adding the MGIPI-W would not result in an increase in the predictive power of the model and not explain further variance above and beyond what was explained by personal experience of sexism. Model 1 was significant for both outcomes and experience of sexism was positively related to depression and negative affect (see Table 2-6). As evidenced by the non-significant *F* change and the minor R^2 increase, Model 2 did not show significant improvement in the predictive power. As further evidence, experience of sexism remained the only significant predictor of both outcomes.

Table 2-6.

Standardized regression coefficients, F tests, and R2 of the second set of hierarchical regressions.

	Anger	Disdain	Resignation	Hostility towards men	Depression	Negative Affect
Model 1						
Experience of Sexism	0.47**	0.44**	0.29**	0.27**	0.33**	0.32**
R^2_{adj}	0.22	0.19	0.08	0.07	0.10	0.10
F (df = 1, 199)	56.20**	47.48**	17.59**	15.18**	24.09**	22.74**
Model 2						
Experience of Sexism	0.29**	0.23**	0.15	0.04	0.30**	0.29**
Workplace Inequalities	0.26**	0.26**	0.07	0.25**	-0.08	-0.07
Domestic Imbalance	-0.06	-0.11	0.20*	0.23**	0.06	0.12
Harassment towards Women	0.13	0.14	-0.06	0.02	0.06	-0.02
Social Expectations	0.02	0.09	0.15	0.07	0.04	0.08
R^2_{adj}	0.28	0.26	0.14	0.23	0.09	0.09
ΔR^2	0.08	0.09	0.08	0.18	0.01	0.01
F (df = 5, 195)	16.59**	15.37**	7.36**	13.08**	5.08**	5.16**
ΔF (df = 4. 195)	5.43 **	6.12**	4.50**	11.74**	0.4	0.79

Note. **p < .01, *p < .05

General Discussion

The aim of the current research was to create and validate a measurement tool – named MGIPI-W – that captures perceptions of gender inequalities affecting women. Previous studies in this area have typically taken a generic approach by examining a composite evaluation of several discrepancies (e.g., Kinias & Kim, 2012) or focusing on a specific aspect, usually workplace inequalities (e.g., Tougas & Veilleux, 1988). However, gender inequalities take up several forms and manifest in diverse domains, ranging from intimate family contexts (e.g., Allen, 2016) to the broader economic landscape (e.g., Ryan & Haslam, 2007), and, although intertwined, can trigger distinct psychological reactions. To address the limitations of prior literature, our study took a comprehensive approach by assessing women's perceptions of gender inequalities affecting women at a collective level, considering multiple aspects simultaneously.

Through five separate studies, we gathered robust evidence supporting a four-factor structure that encompasses perceptions of domestic imbalance, workplace inequalities, harassment towards women, and social expectations. The correlations among the four subscales across all studies suggest that recognizing inequality in a certain domain may make people more likely to see inequalities in other domains as well, and underscore the need for a holistic approach to the study of inequalities. Remarkably, the four factors exhibited distinct associations with different outcomes, highlighting the unique role of each factor in comprehending the complex reactions to gender inequalities.

Initially, a pilot study exploring the views of laywomen regarding gender inequalities revealed that such views were congruent with the multidimensional nature of the issue, as previously identified in the literature. This study helped us refine the initial item pool. In Study 1, we used exploratory factor analysis to reduce the number of items to 16, which were then categorized into four subscales: social expectations (5 items), workplace inequalities (4

items), domestic imbalance (3 items), and harassment towards women (4 items). This solution was confirmed in Study 2. Study 3 and Study 4 provided strong evidence for its convergent, predictive, and discriminant validity. Whereas Studies 1 to 4 were conducted in Italy, Study 5 replicated the four-factor structure in the UK, provided evidence of incremental validity of the MGIPI-W compared to a unidimensional approach, and empirically differentiated the MGIPI-W from a measure of experience of sexism.

Specifically, in Study 3 the MGIPI-W showed convergent validity by positively correlating with an existing measure of workplace inequality perception (Tougas & Veilleux, 1988). Supporting predictive validity, it also proved that the four MGIPI-W dimensions were positively related to group-based emotions and the reported experiences of sexism. When the four dimensions were entered as predictors in the multiple regression models, anger was significantly predicted by workplace inequalities only, whereas disdain was significantly predicted by perceptions of workplace inequalities and harassment.

On the one hand, these findings are consistent with previous evidence linking perceiving group-based inequality to group-based emotions such as anger and resentment (e.g., Smith et al., 2012), which are strongly associated with collective action intentions (e.g., Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021). On the other, whereas previous studies focused on the driving effect of perceived workplace gender inequalities (e.g., Boeckmann & Feather, 2007; Sipe et al., 2016), this research, adopting a multidimensional measure of gender inequalities, highlighted that the awareness that women are a target of harassment, too, can play a unique role in predicting group-based emotions.

Additionally, in line with previous research on this topic (e.g., Ruggiero & Taylor, 1995; Stroebe et al., 2010), Study 3 found that perceiving group-level gender inequalities was associated with a higher likelihood of reporting personal experiences of sexism. Interestingly,

when looking at the predictive validity of all subscales simultaneously, this effect was mostly driven by perceiving more workplace inequalities and social expectations. As mentioned, the unexpected negative relationship between perceived domestic imbalance and reported experience of sexism can be attributed to the effect of partialling out of the other dimensions.

Nevertheless, this apparently surprising finding might be because people may perceive gender differences in domestic roles without deeming them unjust. For instance, previous studies on straight couples' household dynamics found that a gendered division of household chores, because often not perceived as unfair, did not directly harm relationship quality (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018; Ogolsky et al., 2014). Similarly, when accounting for other gender inequalities, perceiving greater domestic imbalance may not correlate with increased recognition and reporting of sexism. Instead, it could be linked to a reduced acknowledgment of sexism, as these imbalances may not always be perceived as unjust.

Study 4 underscored the importance of accounting for different aspects of gender inequalities, by analyzing how each domain was associated with support for affirmative action policies and attitudes towards women's sexual freedom. Although all MGIPI-W dimensions were associated with the two latter variables at the bivariate level, in the multiple regression models workplace inequalities predicted support for affirmative action, and social expectations predicted attitudes towards women's sexual freedom.

Study 5 replicated the four-factor structure of the MGIPI-W in a distinct social and cultural context, the UK, showing that even in a context characterized by higher gender equality and higher awareness around gender inequalities (Pew Research Centre, 2019; World Economic Forum, 2021), women' experiences declinate according to the four dimensions individuated in the proposed measure. Additionally, Study 5 provided compelling evidence

for the incremental validity of the MGIPI-W, improving predictive capacity beyond a unidimensional approach.

Notably, the inclusion of additional dimensions of perceived gender inequalities not only improved the ability to predict group-based emotions and hostility towards men but also shed light on the nuances of such relationships. For instance, in line with the results of Study 3, perceiving more workplace gender inequalities and harassment towards women – which one may argue to be the more "structural" aspects of gender inequalities necessitating coordinated solutions (e.g., collective actions) – predicted experiencing more anger, which represents an intense emotional response to the injustice of one's group situation and a powerful driver of action aimed at changing it (Leach et al., 2015). Perceiving more domestic imbalance and social expectations affecting women's lives – which may represent more justified and normalized aspects of gender inequalities – emerged instead as unique predictors of resignation, an emotion linked to a state of sad immobility and passive acceptance (e.g., Osborne et al., 2012). The latter finding is intriguing, as it speaks of the widespread acceptance of an unequal distribution of unpaid housework between men and women, which has shown to be particularly resistant over decades (e.g., Jasper et al., 2022). On the one hand, the unequal involvement in household chores between men and women aligns with the persistence of stereotypes of women as more communal (i.e., nurturing, concerned for others) than men, even in women's self-views and in the most equalitarian countries (Henschel et al., 2019; Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2023). On the other hand, the link between domestic imbalance and resignation echoes findings from studies on benevolent sexism (Becker et al., 2011). Benevolent sexism, appealing to women for its positive characterization and provision of intimacy and security in heterosexual relationships (Hammond & Overall, 2017), may lead women to overlook the power dynamics it reinforces. Consequently, women might not fully recognize the negative repercussions of unequal domestic duties, potentially finding self-

worth and security in a gender role structure that portrays them as indispensable in the private, family domain. More generally, while such an interpretation requires empirical investigation, these findings underscore the necessity of comprehensive analyses to understand the diverse emotional responses to different facets of gender inequalities and advance our comprehension of gender-related phenomena.

Finally, Study 5 highlighted that the MGIPI-W predicts women's responses to gender inequalities in a distinct manner from personal experience of sexism (Bowleg et al., 2008). For instance, both personal experiences of sexism and perceptions of group-level gender inequalities contributed to feeding anger and disdain, whereas resignation was specifically related to the perception of domestic imbalance. Moreover, the association between personal experiences of sexism and hostility towards men was fully suppressed when the MGIPI-W dimensions were added to the model, as hostility towards men was mainly driven by perceptions of workplace inequality and domestic imbalance. Conversely, personal experience of sexism was critical to depression and negative affect – two individual-level outcomes – which were not related to perceptions of gender inequalities as captured by the MGIPI-W.

Taken together, these findings corroborate the importance of moving toward a multidimensional conceptualization of gender inequalities. In hindsight, one might draw an analogy between our findings and Pratto and Walker's (2004) conceptual framework on gender inequalities. The authors identified four fundamental sources of gender-based power, encompassing force (which includes acts like assault, rape, sexual harassment, and emotional abuse), resource control (which involves mechanisms in social institutions that favor men while disadvantaging women), social obligations (focusing on caregiving and domestic responsibilities, where women often bear greater burdens than men) and consensual ideologies (including norms, gender roles, and stereotypes, which inevitably result in

concrete pressures on women). These four sources seem to align with the domains of gender inequalities emerging from our research, respectively harassment towards women, workplace inequalities, domestic imbalance, and social expectations. More generally, both our conceptualization and Pratto and Walker's (2004) model converge in underlining the necessity to conceive gender inequalities as taking on different aspects, including structural barriers (workplace inequalities), intergroup phenomena such as harassment towards women, as well as more proximal derivatives of gender stereotypes, epitomized in domestic imbalance and social expectations.

Theoretical Implications

Exploring the multifaceted nature of gender inequalities and advocating for a broader range of domains where groups perceive unfair treatment, this research raises questions about the extensive impact of perceiving gender inequalities. For instance, they may extend beyond commonly studied outcomes, such as intergroup attitudes (e.g., Dambrun et al., 2006; Moscatelli et al., 2014), wellbeing (e.g., Branscombe et al., 1999) or support for social change (e.g., Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021), and also touch on other outcomes that have been overlooked, such as behavioral intentions and behaviors in reaction to episodes of vicarious discrimination (i.e., an ingroup member being discriminated against).

Furthermore, examining the impact of perceiving structural disadvantage through a social identity lens, it becomes imperative to delve into the intricate relationship between the cognitive awareness of group-based disadvantages and the emergence of a collective identity (Branscombe et al., 1999). Such an association may pave the way for the recognition of group-related inequities across various domains, ultimately forming a collective identity marked by shared grievances among group members and a desire to demand justice (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013). For instance, in the context of Latino students in the US (Cronin et al., 2012) and Whites and Maori in New Zealand (Barlow et al., 2013), perceptions of group-based

discrimination had an indirect positive effect on political engagement on behalf of the disadvantaged through higher ethnic identification. It is important for researchers to more closely examine how perceptions of inequality, collective identifications, and support for social change interplay in the context of people reacting to the structural disadvantage of gender inequalities.

Practical Implications

This research underscores some practical implications. Firstly, acknowledging the multidimensional nature of gender inequalities invites a reconsideration of the phenomenon as very pervasive, going beyond workplace or harassment contexts. Specifically, it prompts reflection on social expectations and domestic imbalances, often overlooked yet influential aspects contributing to gender inequality. While often neglected, both domestic imbalance as well as social expectations can have serious consequences on the way children are socialized, and hence how gender inequalities are maintained through generations (Farrell et al., 2023; Marks et al., 2009). Thus, it is very important that schools – which form a fundamental intergroup and intergender contact context – provide education on the need for gender equality from the lowest grade, also considering the implicit cognition and behaviors that may strengthen biased gender conceptions, such as asking female children only to set the lunch table or asking male children only to lead a group with a competence task.

Secondly, the study emphasizes the significance of perceptions of gender inequalities beyond personal experiences. Even in the absence of direct and recognized encounters with inequality, belonging to a gender group and understanding its challenges can evoke meaningful psychological reactions. This highlights the ubiquitous impact of gender inequalities in a patriarchal society, urging psychologists, educators, and practitioners to recognize this influence. Lastly, interventions, whether focused on increasing awareness or on eliciting specific outcomes, such as increasing women's participation in collective action for gender

equality, must carefully navigate the varied effects of different components of gender inequality, as this nuanced understanding is crucial to avoid unintended consequences and backlash in interventions for social change.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

This research found strong support for the significance of four primary aspects of women's perceptions of gender inequalities across different groups and demographics. On top of these key dimensions of gender inequalities for women, which may be good descriptors of inequalities at least across most Western countries, each society may also have its unique manifestations of gender inequality. Indeed, some variations of what is shown by, asked from, and expected by people according to their gender are to be expected across different geographical places, times, and cultures (e.g., Costa et al., 2001). For instance, shared expectations about women's dress codes – as captured by the MGIPI-W's social expectations dimension – may differ across different cultural contexts, underscoring the need for future research to delve into the complexity of gender inequalities and to account for additional nuances, by taking a culturally sensitive approach. Furthermore, being all studies carried out in Italy and the UK, the relevant question of whether our scale works in non-WEIRD contexts remains. Gender is a social product, that is inherently embedded in the social context under examination, and hence the generalizability of our scale to social systems that rely on different religious, cultural, and ideological matrixes must not be taken for granted.

In light of addressing inequality through a more naturalistic and complex lens, integrating these findings within an intersectional approach is crucial. While some simplification was necessary for this foundational step, a binary approach to social inequality is simply insufficient to fully comprehend the phenomenon, and adopting an intersectional approach will uncover novel aspects arising from multiple social identities (e.g., Mitha et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2020). To advance knowledge in this area, future research should explore

the experiences of individuals who embrace multiple stigmatized social identities, such as women belonging to minority groups (e.g., sexual, or ethnic minorities).

While this conceptual framework broadens the understanding of gender inequalities affecting women, it is also fundamental to move forward our understanding of how patriarchal systems represent an issue that extends beyond women. For instance, despite men's largely privileged status, social expectations around manhood also come with several health and social detriments (e.g., Bosson et al., 2021; Bosson & Vandello, 2011; Richardson et al., 2021). Expanding beyond gender binarism, non-binary and transgender individuals confront even more stigmatization and discrimination than cisgender women, detrimental to their career prospects (Davidson, 2016; Grant et al., 2011) and mental health (Delozier et al., 2020; Scandurra et al., 2021), while also facing experiences that are largely not in common with that of cisgender women, such as family rejection (Veale et al., 2022) and identity denial (Morgenroth et al., 2023). Hence, while certain inequalities are likely to be commonly experienced by multiple gender groups, specific forms of inequality can be found too, and we encourage future research to adopt a similar approach to examine the experiences of other gender groups.

Finally, it should be noted that in all four studies, average scores for each subscale were quite high. This finding is likely due to three reasons. First, in this research, we asked only women and some non-binary people socialized as women about their perceptions of a disadvantaged world. Coherently with previous research, we would expect cis-gender men to perceive significantly lower levels of gender inequalities (e.g., Davis & Robinson, 1991; García-González et al., 2019). Second, as we discussed earlier, the aim of the MGIPI-W was to assess perceptions of gender inequalities affecting women inequalities and not legitimacy beliefs. Thus, the fact that our participants perceived inequalities to be high in all domains is far from saying that they appraised them all as unjust. Third, one more potential weakness of

this research is that the sample population was limited to volunteers, which could have potentially biased the sample towards individuals who were more interested in gender inequalities. To get a fuller picture, future studies should use our scale among different samples.

Conclusion

This paper brings substantial evidence of the advantages of considering gender inequality not as a univariate issue, but rather as a structural condition that manifests in different forms and across different contexts, which can make the weight of inequality unbearable. Our research has developed a reliable measurement tool that assesses perceptions of gender inequalities affecting women, and that proved useful in two different Western contexts. The MGIPI-W's multifaceted approach considers the complex nature of gender inequalities, thereby enhancing its applicability across various research and practical domains. In light of the multidimensional nature of gender inequalities revealed by this research and the efficacy of the MGIPI-W scale, it is imperative for psychologists, social scientists, educators, and society at large to adopt this perspective and foster a comprehensive understanding to address and rectify these pervasive structural disparities.

Supplementary Materials Section A

Sociodemographic Information

Table A. Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants (Studies 1-5).

Demographic characteristic	Study 1 (*N* = 703)		Study 2 (*N* = 550)		Study 3 (*N* =132)		Study 4 (*N* = 96)		Study 5 (*N* = 201)	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Gender										
Women	703	100	546	99.3	132	100	96	100	201	100
Men	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Non-binary	-	-	4	0.7	-	-	-	-	-	-
Nationality										
Italian	596	84.79	390	70.92	127	95.45	96	100	3	1.49
Portuguese	1	0.14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moldavian	1	0.14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Brazilian	1	0.14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Albanian	-	-	4	0.73	-	-	-	-	-	-
Indian	-	-	1	0.18	-	-	-	-	1	0.50
Bulgarian	-	-	1	0.18	-	-	-	-	1	0.50
Tunisian	-	-	1	0.18	-	-	-	-	-	-
Romanian	-	-	1	0.18	-	-	-	-	-	-
Swiss	-	-	1	0.18	-	-	-	-	-	-
British	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	162	80.60
English	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	14	6.97
Scottish	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	1.49
Welsh	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.50
American	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2	1.00
Canadian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.50
Egyptian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.50
German	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.50
Greek	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.50
Irish	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.50
Polish	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	1.99
Russian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.50
Slovak	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.50
Ukrainian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.50
Zimbabwean	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.50
Latvian	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	1	0.50
No answer at all	104	14.79	151	27.45	6	4.55	-	-	-	-
Sexual orientation										
Straight	557	79.23	319	58	119	90.15	96	100	176	87.56
Bisexual	18	2.56	42	7.64	1	0.76	-	-	14	6.97
Homosexual	5	0.71	7	1.27	-	-	-	-	7	3.48
Pansexual	3	0.43	18	3.27	1	0.76	-	-	3	1.49
Asexual	1	0.14	2	.36	1	0.76	-	-	1	0.50

Demographic characteristic (continued)	Study 1 (*N* = 703)		Study 2 (*N* = 550)		Study 3 (*N* =132)		Study 4 (*N* = 96)		Study 5 (*N* = 201)	
	n	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%	*n*	%
Sexual orientation (continued)										
Queer	-	-	5	.91	-	-	-	-	-	-
Do not know yet	1	0.14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Preferred not to say	17	2.42	10	1.82	10	7.58	-	-	-	-
No answer at all	101	14.4	147	26.73	-	-	-	-	-	-
Educational level*										
Primary school	1	0.14	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Middle school	20	2.84	-	-	1	0.76	-	-	2	1.00
High school	218	31.01	-	-	37	28.03	29	30.21	70	34.83
Bachelor's degree	43	6.12	227	41.27	16	12.12	7	7.29	95	47.26
First level Master	21	2.99	-	-	1	0.76	4	4.17	-	-
Master's degree	212	30.16	165	30.00	53	40.15	40	41.67	22	10.95
Second Level Master	24	3.41	1	0.18	8	6.06	3	3.13	-	-
PhD	34	4.84	3	0.55	6	4.55	6	6.25	9	4.48
Other specialization	-	-	5	0.91	5	3.79	6	6.25	-	-
Preferred not to say	5	0.71	-	-	3	2.27	1	1.04	-	-
Other types of education	31	4.41	-	-	1	0.76	-	-	3	1.49
No answer at all	94	13.37	149	27.09	1	0.76	-	-	-	-
Employment										
Unemployed	4	0.57	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	4.48
Student	52	7.40	306	55.64	-	-	-	-	9	4.48
Employed	487	69.27	-	-	128	96.97	94	97.92	138	68.66
Employed and student	40	5.69	97	17.64	3	2.27	2	2.08	6	2.99
Looking for 1st occupation	2	0.28	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Housewife	3	0.43	-	-	-	-	-	-	23	11.44
Retired	17	2.42	-	-	-	-	-	-	16	7.96
Preferred not to say	4	0.57	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
No answer at all	94	13.37	147	26.73	1	0.76	-	-	-	-
Variable	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*	*Mean*	*SD*
Age	46.57	13.29	22.94	4.36	50.27	7.98	50.40	8.23	41.24	13.16

Note. *****Differently from the other studies, the provided level of education for participants enrolled in study 2 refers to their current level of education and not the highest level of education completed.

Additional analysis concerning the social expectations items

Regarding the items related to social expectations, which lack explicit references to another gender group, one may say that they may be understood independently of gender. Even though participants were primed with considerations around gender inequalities from the title of the survey and the informed consent, we wanted to see how people understood those items (one may implicitly understand "people" in place of "women"; e.g., "A woman who initiates sexual activities is seen as being sexually promiscuous" may be understood as "A person who initiates sexual activities is seen as being sexually promiscuous"). This understanding would be detrimental to the validity of the scale.

To examine if the items included in the subscales of social expectations were understood independently of how these phenomena apply differently across genders, in Study 5 we added one question in which we listed them all and asked them if they thought that these expectations applied more to the group of women or the group of men (1 = *more to the group of men*; 7 = *more to the group of women*). We run a single-sample t-test against the critical number 4, representing the middle point of the scale and indicating that these expectations apply equally to women and men. Participants' responses indicated that these expectations applied more strongly to the group of women (M = 5.96, SD = 1.30) than to the group of men, t (200) = 21.37, $p < .001$.

Measures included in Study 5

Perceptions of gender inequalities (MGIPI-W).

In this first section, we seek to understand how you perceive gender inequalities in society. Please read and respond to the following statements on a 7-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Indicate whether you believe each statement describes occurrences in your society. For instance, choose "strongly agree" if you perceive the item reflects a prevalent phenomenon in your society, and "strongly disagree" if you believe it doesn't occur at all. Your responses should reflect your beliefs about these statements' applicability to your society, not your personal views around these issues or whether or not you think they are fair.

- A woman who initiates sexual activities is seen as being sexually promiscuous.
- A woman who is too outgoing is often labelled as somewhat of a bimbo.
- Women without children are seen as being worse people, than men without children.
- A woman who dresses in trackies and hoodie is considered by others to be neglecting herself.
- After having a child, a woman is expected to stay home and take care of the child until they are old enough to care for themselves.
- All other things being equal, women encounter more difficulties in establishing a career than men do.
- When seeking employment, women are less likely to be hired than a man who has the same credentials.
- In times of crisis, women are more likely to lose their jobs than men.
- After having a child, women experience greater negative outcomes at work than men do.
- Typically, it is women who clean the house.
- Typically, women are responsible for washing and ironing clothes for others in the house.
- Often, the "mental burden" of running a home and caring for a family is the responsibility of women.

- Compared to a man, a woman is more likely to receive sexual advances at a job interview or in the workplace.
- A woman's clothing choice is commented on more often than a man's clothing choice.
- Women are often subjected to unwelcome sexual jokes.
- At night, it is more dangerous for a woman to walk alone than for a man to walk alone.

Emotions.

When thinking about inequalities between men and women, how much do you feel the following emotions from 1 (not at all) to 7 (extremely)?

- Anger
- Disdain
- Resignation

Experience of sexism (Bowleg et al., 2008).

In the next section, we are interested in some of the experiences you might have had as a woman. Please indicate how frequently you have experienced the following situations from 1 (never) to 7 (most of the times).

As a woman, how often . . .

- Have people made inappropriate or unwanted sexual advances at you?
- Have you been really angry about something sexist that was done to you? (By “sexist” we mean when you receive unfair treatment because you are a woman)
- Have you been called a sexist name like bitch, cunt, chick, or other names?
- Have you been made fun of, picked on, pushed, shoved, hit or threatened with harm?

- Have you been really angry about sexist or sexual jokes?
- Have you been treated unfairly by your boyfriend, husband or other important men in your life?
- Have you been treated unfairly by your family?
- Have you been treated unfairly by your employers, bosses, and supervisors?
- Have you been treated unfairly by teachers, school administrators and coaches?
- Have you been treated by your co-workers or fellow students?
- Have you been treated unfairly by people in service jobs such as store clerks or waiters?
- Have you been denied a raise, promotion, a job or something at work you deserved?
- Have you been treated unfairly by people in helping jobs such as doctors, nurses, or dentists?

Depression (DASS-21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995).

In this section, we aim to understand your experiences related to emotional well-being and mood. Please read each statement carefully and indicate how each statement applies to your emotional state. The rating scale is as follows: (1) Does not apply to me at all, (2) Applies to me to some degree, or some of the time, (3) Applies to me to a considerable degree or a good part of time, (4) Applies to me very much or most of the time.

- I can’t seem to experience any positive feeling at all.
- I find it difficult to work up the initiative to do things.
- I feel that I had nothing to look forward to.

- I feel down-hearted and blue.
- I am unable to become enthusiastic about anything.
- I feel I am not worth much as a person.
- I feel that life is meaningless.

Negative affect (AVI; Tsai et al., 2006).

Please indicate to what degree you currently agree with the following statements, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree):

- I feel sad.
- - I feel lonely.
- - I feel unhappy.

Hostility towards men (Rollero et al., 2014)

Now, think about men and women in your society, and indicate your agreement with the following statements, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

- Men will always fight for greater control in society.
- When in positions of power, men sexually harass women.
- Men act like babies when they are sick.

Section B

Chapter 3

Identity Dynamics in Gender Equality Advocacy: Perceptions of Inequality, Social Identification, and Collective Action Intentions [2]

[2] Ciaffoni, S., Jetten, J., Koçak, Ö. E., Rubini, M. & Moscatelli, S. (2023). Identity Dynamics in Gender Equality Advocacy: Perceptions of Inequality, Social Identification, and Collective Action Intentions. *Manuscript in preparation*.

Abstract

This research addressed a gap in the collective action literature by investigating the often-overlooked role of perceiving gender inequalities in shaping social identification with the disadvantaged and politicized group. Grounded in the rejection-identification model, the research explored the complex pathways through which women perceiving gender inequalities form social identities with women and feminists and mobilize for collective action against gender inequalities. It also considered the key role of perceived illegitimacy. In Study 6 (Italy, N = 372), workplace inequalities, harassment, and social expectations positively predicted social identification with feminists, emphasizing the importance of perceiving inequalities in adopting a politicized identity. Similarly, perceptions of workplace inequalities predicted stronger identification with women. Perceived illegitimacy positively related to collective action intentions and feminist identification and moderated the relationships between perceiving inequalities and feminist identity. In Study 7 (Turkey, N=604), workplace inequalities and social expectations positively predicted social identification with feminists, which was instead negatively associated with perceived domestic imbalance. While perceived illegitimacy didn't directly predict collective action support, it moderated relationships between gender inequalities and feminist identification, revealing nuanced dynamics in legitimacy perceptions and social identification. This research highlighted the processes by which, in line with the rejection-identification hypothesis, women who perceive inequalities are led to identify with feminists (and partly with women) to support collective action.

Keywords: gender equality, inequality perception, rejection-identification, feminist identification, collective action

Introduction

Globally, women constitute slightly more than half of the global population, yet they undeniably face discrimination and differential treatment across many domains in all societies (EIGE, 2023). While there is plenty of data and statistics describing the entity of this pervasive inequality, it is people's perception of it – rather than actual inequality per se – that determines people's psychological reactions (Jetten & Peters, 2019). Previous research uncovered four main forms of gender inequalities that women perceive (see Chapter 2). The first, named *harassment towards women*, includes both subtle and explicit unwanted sexual advances, solicitations for sexual favors, catcalling, and other behaviors that can demean, humiliate, or intimidate women (Brown et al., 2020). The second, named *workplace inequalities*, captures different barriers that women still face in the workplace and that prevent them from sustainably accessing and maintaining certain prestigious careers (Ryan et al., 2016). The third one, *domestic imbalance*, describes the unequal distribution of domestic responsibilities (Trappe et al., 2015). Last, *social expectations*, capture those unspoken yet very influential gender inequalities, including but not limited to societal pressures to conform to beauty standards (Ramati-Ziber et al., 2020).

By taking this multidimensional approach, this research aimed to understand how these different dimensions of gender inequalities relate to women's social identification with women and with feminists and collective action intentions in favor of gender equality. It also tested the role of perceived illegitimacy. To address this aim, we run two correlational studies among women in Italy (Study 6) and Turkey (Study 7).

The Bidirectional Relationship between Perceived Inequality and Social Identification

Without perceiving some sort of inequalities people would not support social change, and this effect has been widely investigated (see Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021 for the most

recent review). For instance, the Social Identity Model of Collective Action (SIMCA; van Zomeren et al., 2008) posits that when individuals take on a certain social identity, they will be more likely to perceive inequalities affecting their group, and hence also more likely to come together to challenge the status quo. In other words, as individuals develop a stronger connection to a relevant group, this affiliation serves as a lens through which they view and understand the social environment around them, establishing the basis for being able to see inequality (Turner et al., 1987). Therefore, is social identification with a particular group a precondition for individuals to perceive inequality and act in support of change?

According to the Encapsulated Model of Social Identity in Collective Action (EMSICA; Thomas et al., 2009) the answer is negative. The model suggests that when people encounter situations of systemic injustice and, simultaneously, think that a group of like-minded people may be able to solve that social problem, then they may end up *creating* a shared identity. In other words, social identification may be a byproduct of perceiving inequalities and not a necessary precondition for people to see injustice. There is growing evidence supporting this model (e.g., McGarty et al., 2014; Thomas et al., 2012; Uysal & Akfırat, 2022; Yustisia et al., 2020).

Zubielevitch et al. (2020) provided insightful longitudinal evidence indicating a reciprocal relationship between social identification and perceived inequality. Their findings suggest that while the impact of adopting a social identity strengthens the perception of group-based inequalities, individuals' awareness of disadvantages also influences their level of identification with the respective group, highlighting the bidirectional nature of this relationship (however, the effect of social identification on perceived inequality was stronger). In other words, on the one hand, social identities serve as a foundation for collective cognition, and, at the same time, social identities are the results of shared thinking among group members (Stürmer & Simon, 2009; Swaab et al., 2007). Similarly to other

psychological phenomena, approaching the issue of the relationship between social identification and perceived inequality with a *chicken or egg mindset* may not be so fruitful to understand the psychological processes to the best of our abilities. Because this work focuses on the correlates of perceived gender inequalities, we referred to the conceptual frameworks that can better inform our research questions, and therefore we looked at the psychological process by which when people are aware of group-based inequality they can respond by identifying more strongly with such group.

When Identification Cures: The Rejection-Identification Model

A theoretical model that can even better inform the psychological process that sees social identification as stemming from perceiving inequalities is the Rejection Identification Model (Branscombe et al., 1999). It posits that when people perceive to be discriminated against and they attribute it to prejudice, this may lead them to identify more strongly with their social group, which in turn helps them maintain well-being. In stigma research, group identification has been associated with lower depression levels, improved self-esteem, and better overall psychological adjustment, as outlined in Schmitt & Branscombe's (2002) review. While the disadvantage causes people to develop low self-esteem, identifying with one's group constitutes an asset with which individuals can cope with the disadvantage, a source from which they can draw psychological strength (Jetten et al., 2001, 2018). The increased group identification can offer individuals not only greater social support but also a sense of common destiny and a sense of positive self-worth (Cronin et al., 2012; Outten et al., 2009; Wellman et al., 2022). Previous research supported the rejection-identification model in various marginalized groups, including Black Americans (Branscombe et al., 1999; Chae et al., 2011), as well as gay men (Doyle & Molix, 2014), women (Schmitt et al., 2002), people with body piercings (Jetten et al., 2001), people with HIV (Molero et al., 2011), overweight

individuals (Wellman et al., 2022) and people with physical disabilities (Molero et al., 2019) emphasizing the protective role of group identification in the face of discrimination.

Most studies in this tradition have investigated the effects of perceived personal discrimination because of one's group membership, and only a very few studies in the rejection-identification research tradition have looked at the role of group-level discrimination (i.e., perceiving that one's group is discriminated against, independently of personal experiences of such discrimination; Armenta & Hunt, 2009; Balkaya et al., 2019; Stuart et al., 2020). For instance, in a study of British Muslims (Stuart et al., 2020), higher perception of discrimination against Muslims was related to stronger Muslim identity, while being personally discriminated against as Muslim decreased British identification and was linked to more depressive symptoms. That is, the rejection-identification effect was found for group discrimination, but not personal discrimination. Furthermore, most of these studies have looked at the impact of discrimination and identification on well-being, while the relationship with support for social change has been severely overlooked. To our knowledge, outside of EMSICA, only Molero et al. (2011) and Cronin et al., (2012) have looked at collective action intentions from a rejection-identification perspective and found that higher perceptions of discrimination was associated with increased social identification and support for social change. Filling this gap, in this research we looked at the relationships among perceptions of gender inequalities affecting women social identification with relevant groups, and collective action intentions.

Women and Social Change: Which Groups?

The key driving force behind collective action is individuals' identification with the group and especially its politicized form, such as identifying with a social movement organization or an activist group (van Zomeren et al., 2008). This politicized identification results from the degree to which individuals have personally adopted the collective

grievances as their own and they are willing to actively participate in the political sphere to obtain the group's objectives and restore its thought place in society (Simon & Klandermans, 2001). In the case of women, this politicized identity may be assimilated into a feminist identification (Radke et al., 2016).

In exploring gender identity through a multiple identities approach, van Breen et al. (2017) found that identification with women and identification with feminists are orthogonal to each other and that the interplay between these two identifications plays a crucial role in shaping attitudes toward gender-related issues. Specifically, they found that identification with women reflects attitudes toward the identity content of "being a woman", in terms of group characteristics, interests and values; while identification with feminists, reflects attitudes toward the social position of the group, and concerns with issues of inequality and relative status in society. Consequently, both types of identification were predictive of collective action and perceptions of gender stereotypes, often with additive or interactive effects. These findings speak to the complexity of the relationship between these two types of identification and the compelling need to consider both in understanding women's support for social change. Therefore, in the current research we took both social identities into account.

Overview of the Present Research

Based on the literature on the rejection-identification model (Branscombe et al., 1999), this study aimed to investigate the interplay between perceptions of gender inequalities, the development of identifications with both women and feminists and the collective action intentions to promote gender equality, while also considering the key role of perceived illegitimacy (Dare & Jetten, 2022). This research introduced several novel aspects. First, it adopted a multidimensional conceptualization of gender inequalities, encompassing workplace inequalities, harassment towards women, social expectations, and domestic imbalance. By considering each facet of gender inequality, we were able to explore how

diverse perceptions contribute to supporting social change through collective action. Second, this study pioneered an examination of the relationship between perceptions of gender inequalities and the formation of social identification with both women and feminists, providing a more nuanced understanding of how people navigate these identities in response to gender inequalities. Third, our research was conducted in two distinct cultural, legislative, and social contexts: Italy and Turkey. Notably, these countries are ranked 79th and 129th, respectively, in the World Economic Forum's gender inequality index (World Economic Forum, 2023). While our primary goal was not to compare these countries directly, this dual-context approach allowed us to shed light on the underlying processes through which women forge social identities and rally behind collective action.

Based on the revised literature, we advanced several hypotheses. Drawing from the rejection-identification model (Branscombe et al., 1999) and the EMSICA (Thomas et al., 2009), which proposes that social identification can stem from the appraisal of inequality, we predicted a positive relationship between perceptions of gender inequalities and identification with women (Hypothesis 1a). Similarly, we expected a positive relationship between perceptions of gender inequalities and identification with feminists, based on the same theoretical foundations (Hypothesis 1b). In an exploratory way, we tested whether perceived illegitimacy, intended as beliefs about whether such inequalities are fair or not (Dare & Jetten, 2022), moderated these paths from perceiving gender inequalities to identifying with feminists and with women. In fact, considerations about the legitimacy of inequality can be thought to influence the relationship between perceived inequality and people’s reactions to such inequalities. For instance, Willis et al. (2015) showed that perceived legitimacy moderates the relationship between perceived inequality and ideal inequality. We made no specific predictions over which component of perceived inequality may have the stronger effect.

Second, based on the relative deprivation literature (Smith et al., 2012) and the collective action literature (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021), we expected perceptions of gender inequalities to predict intentions to engage in collective action in favor of gender equality (Hypothesis 2). Third, we hypothesize that both social identification with women (Hypothesis 3a) and with feminists (Hypothesis 3b) will be positively associated with intentions to support collective action.

Study 6

In Italy, the persistence of gender inequalities is intertwined with a complex web of social and cultural factors (Lomazzi, 2017). Traditional gender norms and expectations continue to shape women's roles and experiences, particularly reinforced in a system where traditional family values are highly endorsed and there is a strong Catholic influence (Mucchi-Faina et al., 2010). These norms often assign women primary responsibility for domestic and caregiving duties, which can limit their participation in the labor force and hinder their access to leadership positions (Istat, 2021; Romens, 2021). Italy also faces challenges related to gender-based violence, with rates of intimate partner violence remaining concerning (Barbara et al., 2020; Citernesi et al., 2015). Nonetheless, participation in collective action for gender equality in Italy is relatively scarce, and few demonstrations are organized mostly in proximity to International Women’s Day (RaiNews, 2023). The multifaceted aspect of gender inequality creates a unique backdrop for examining how perceptions of gender inequalities relate to women's identification and collective action and underscores the importance of understanding the Italian context in tackling these challenges.

Method

Study 6 employed a cross-sectional design. Prior to data collection – which occurred in summer 2021, the study received IRB approval from the Bioethical Committee of the

University of Bologna. Participants were recruited from a large organization in the North of Italy. We excluded 88 cases from the initial sample ($N = 460$), out of which 3 reported identifying as men, 4 preferred not to disclose their gender and 81 failed more than one out of three attention checks spread across the questionnaire. The final sample consisted of 372 women ($M_{age} = 49.90$, $SD_{age} = 8.53$, $min = 24$, $max = 65$).

The vast majority were Italian (368; 98.8%), and the remaining 1.2% were of other nationality (e.g., Portuguese, Italian American, French Italian, Peruvian Italian). In terms of religious affiliation, most of them were Christian ($n = 224$, 60.2%), 69 reported to be atheist (18.5%), 26 were agnostic (7%), 5 were Buddhist (1.3%), and 48 preferred not to indicate their religion (13.0%). Most of them were straight ($n = 353$, 94.9%), 6 were bisexual (1.6%), and the remaining 7.8% were gay, asexual and 10 who preferred not to disclose this information. Last, in terms of education, 94 of them did not go to university (25.3%), 44 completed a bachelor's degree (11.9%), 180 completed a master's degree or equivalent (48.4%), 28 had completed a postgraduate program (7.5%), while 26 (7.0%) preferred not to say.

Participants were invited to participate in an online study on women's perceptions and experience of gender inequalities, and exclusively targeted self-identified women older than 18 years old. All measures that were not already available in Italian were (back-)translated from English by two of the authors. Participation was voluntary.

Materials

Unless differently specified, all scales were presented on a 7-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*completely disagree*) to 7 (*completely agree*). The questionnaire contained the following measures. Perceptions of gender inequalities were assessed using the 16-item Multidimensional Gender Inequalities Perception Inventory – Women's form (MGIPI-W;

Chapter 2), which contains four subscales, namely perceptions of workplace inequalities (e.g., “When seeking employment, women are less likely to be hired than a man who has the same credentials”, α = 81), of domestic imbalance (e.g., “Often, the "mental burden" of running a home and caring for a family is the responsibility of women”, α = .79), of social expectations (e.g., “A woman who initiates sexual activities is seen as being sexually promiscuous”, α = .78) and harassment towards women (e.g., “At night, it is more dangerous for a woman to walk alone than for a man”, α = .72). Perceived illegitimacy of gender inequalities was assessed with two items (α = .58) adapted from Dare and Jetten (2022), asking “Thinking about inequalities between men and women, how fair/justifiable do you think they are?”, answers were provided on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*very much*) and reverse-coded for the analyses. For this measure, we found α = .58 and inter-item correlations of r = .48, p < .001, which can be considered acceptable values for a two-item measure (Pallant, 2020). Social identification with women and with feminists was assessed with the single-item measure of identification developed by Postmes et al., (2013), by asking participants to rate their agreement with the statement “I identify with women/feminists”. Collective action intentions were assessed with two items (α = .84; r = .73, p < .001), namely “I would participate in some form of collective action to promote equality between men and women” and “I would participate in a demonstration against the conditions of women in Italy” (selected and adapted from van Zomeren et al., 2004). Last, participants categorized their political orientation on a slider scale (left-right, coded 0 to 100; Frenken et al., 2023) - which allows participants to indicate their orientation on a continuous rather than discrete scale – and measured together with other demographic questions used to describe the sample.

Results

All descriptive statistics and correlations among measures are presented in Table 3-1. Political orientation, which was significantly related to all variables in the model, was then added as a covariate to the path model.

To test our hypotheses, we conducted our path analyses in Mplus 8.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2019) using the Maximum Likelihood with Robust standard errors (MLR) estimator (Satorra & Bentler, 2001).

Table 3-1.

Means, standard deviations, and correlations between all the variables in Study 6.

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Domestic Imbalance	5.76	1.01								
2. Work Inequality	5.77	0.94	.53***							
3. Harassment towards Women	5.82	0.81	.56***	.62***						
4. Social Expectations	4.61	1.15	.46***	.54***	.64***					
5. Perceived Illegitimacy	5.88	1.29	.14**	.17**	.19***	.14**				
6. Identification with Feminists	4.17	1.48	.17**	.32***	.30***	.25***	.23***			
7. Identification with Women	5.66	1.02	.16**	.26***	.24***	.15**	.18***	.24***		
8. Collective Action Intentions	4.91	1.45	.17**	.34***	.28***	.24***	.29***	.47***	.27***	
9. Political Orientation	29.83	25.23	-.11	-.22***	-.16**	-.17**	-.12*	-.34***	-.15**	-.39***

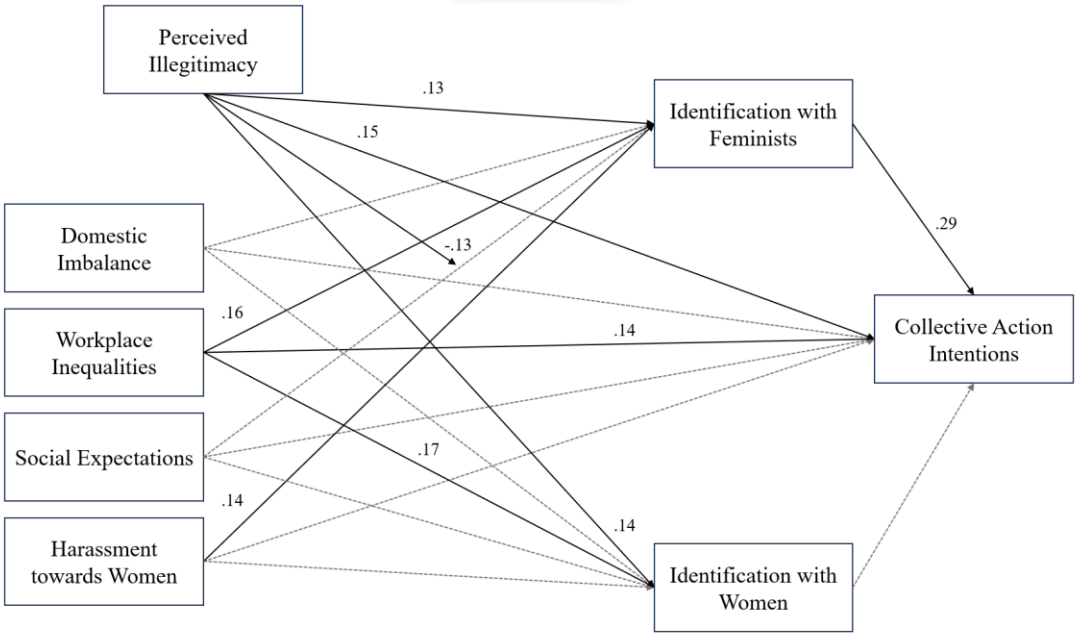
Note. ***p < .01, **p < .01, *p < .05.

In evaluating the goodness of fit for the CFA and the main analyses, we considered several indices: RMSEA, where values below 0.08 denote acceptable fit (Awang, 2012); CFI and TLI, with values exceeding 0.90 signifying acceptable fit and values above 0.95 suggest excellent; SRMR, for which values lower than 0.8 indicate a good fit. The path analysis model demonstrated an acceptable fit: *RMSEA* = 0.034 (90% *CI* [0.000, 0.056]), *CFI* = 0.979,

TLI = 0.949, and *SRMR* = 0.070. See Figure 3-1 for a graphical representation of the path analysis model with all significant paths.

Figure 3-1.

Graphical representation of the path analysis model (Study 6).



Note. Non-significant paths are dashed. Estimates refer to standardized values.

Direct and indirect effects of the path analysis are provided in Table 3-2. Identification with women was significantly predicted by perceptions of workplace inequalities (in support of Hypothesis 1a) and perceived illegitimacy so women who perceived more inequality in the workplace and who thought gender inequalities were more unjust identified more with other women. Identification with feminists was significantly predicted by perceptions of workplace inequalities and harassment (in support of Hypothesis 1b), perceived illegitimacy, and its interaction with perceptions of social expectations so that perceiving inequalities in the domain of social expectations related to stronger identification with feminists only for those women who perceived gender inequalities to be rather just (see Figure 3-2).

Table 3-2.

Direct and indirect effects of the path analysis model (Study 6).

Effect	Standardized Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Direct Effects					
Collective Action Intentions					
Work Inequalities	.137	.056	.027	.246	.014
Domestic Imbalance	-.043	.048	-.137	.051	.367
Harassment towards Women	.025	.069	-.111	.162	.714
Social Expectations	.026	.054	-.080	.132	.633
Identification with Women	.094	.050	-.004	.193	.060
Identification with Feminists	.287	.049	.191	.383	.000
Perceived Illegitimacy	.151	.044	.064	.238	.001
Political Orientation	-.218	.045	-.307	-.129	.000
Identification with Feminists					
Work Inequalities	.155	.065	.028	.282	.017
Domestic Imbalance	-.055	.062	-.176	.065	.368
Harassment towards Women	.142	.070	.005	.278	.041
Social Expectations	.049	.060	-.067	.166	.408
Perceived Illegitimacy	.126	.050	.027	.224	.013
Work Ineq. x Perceived Illegitimacy	-.040	.066	-.170	.090	.546
Domestic Imb. x Perceived Illegitimacy	.004	.051	-.096	.104	.934
Harassment x Perceived Illegitimacy	.062	.068	-.072	.196	.366
Expectations x Perceived Illegitimacy	-.128	.058	-.242	-.015	.026
Political Orientation	-.248	.049	-.344	-.153	.000
Identification with Women					
Work Inequalities	.165	.071	.025	.305	.021
Domestic Imbalance	-.001	.068	-.135	.132	.983
Harassment towards Women	.130	.084	-.035	.295	.121
Social Expectations	-.061	.072	-.203	.080	.396
Perceived Illegitimacy	.140	.052	.039	. 241	.007
Work Ineq. x Perceived Illegitimacy	-.099	.068	-.232	.034	.144
Domestic Imb. x Perceived Illegitimacy	-.010	.068	-.143	.122	.877
Harassment x Perceived Illegitimacy	-.013	.094	-.198	.171	.886
Expectations x Perceived Illegitimacy	.079	.072	-.061	.220	.269
Political Orientation	-.077	.053	-.180	.026	.143
Perceived Illegitimacy					
Political Orientation	-.173	.052	-.276	-.071	.001

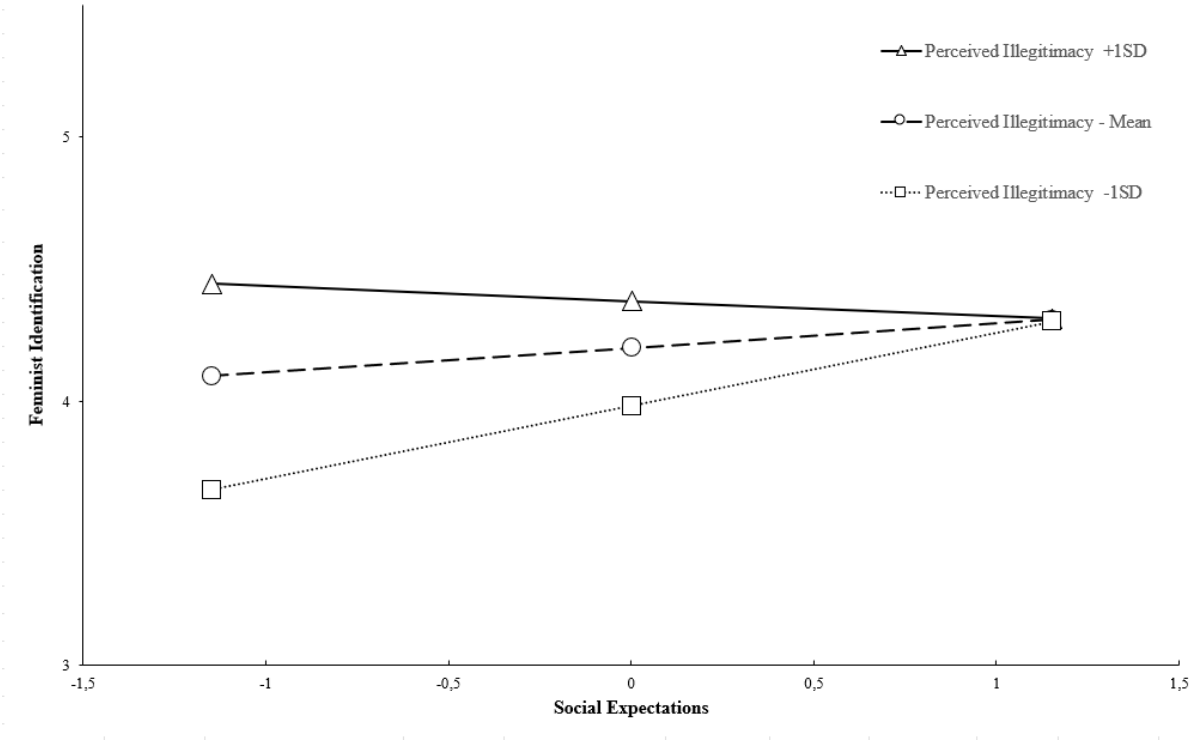
Effect	Standardized Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Work Inequalities					
Political Orientation	-.224	.051	-.324	-.124	.000
Domestic Imbalance					
Political Orientation	-.109	.053	-.212	-.006	.039
Harassment towards Women					
Political Orientation	-.157	.051	-.257	-.058	.002
Social Expectations					
Political Orientation	-.169	.050	-.266	-.072	.001
Indirect Effects					
Work Ineq. > Fem. Id > Coll. Action	.045	.020	.004	.085	.030
Work Ineq. > Wom. Id > Coll. Action	.016	.011	-.005	.036	.145
Domestic Imb. > Fem. Id > Coll. Action	-.016	.018	-.051	.019	.370
Domestic Imb. > Wom. Id > Coll. Action	.001	.006	-.013	.012	.983
Harassment > Fem. Id > Coll. Action	.041	.021	.000	.082	.052
Harassment > Wom. Id > Coll. Action	.012	.010	-.006	.031	.197
Expectations > Fem. Id > Coll. Action	.014	.017	-.020	.048	.414
Expectations > Wom. Id > Coll. Action	-.006	.007	-.020	.009	.435

Note. Standardized estimates, standard errors, confidence intervals, and p-values of all direct and indirect effects investigated in the model. Significant predictors and associations are bolded.

Furthermore, of the four aspects of perceptions of gender inequalities, only workplace inequalities were positively related to collective action intentions, both directly and through the mediation of identification with feminists (in support of Hypothesis 2). Perceived illegitimacy was also positively related to collective action intentions, so women who perceived gender inequalities to be more unjust were more likely to support collective action. Last, political orientation was a significant predictor of collective action intentions so people who self-identified as more left-wing were more likely to support collective action. Additionally, identification with feminists but not identification with women was positively related to collective action intentions, thus supporting Hypotheses 3b, but not 3a.

Figure 3-2.

Graphical representation of the moderation analysis of perceived illegitimacy on the association between perceptions of social expectations and feminist identification.



Discussion

Study 6 investigated the interplay between perceptions of gender inequalities, social identification with women and feminists, perceived illegitimacy, and intentions to support collective action among women in Italy. The results of this study were largely in line with predictions. When women perceived more gender inequalities they identified more strongly with other women as well as with feminists, in line with the rejection-identification hypothesis. Perceiving higher workplace inequalities was associated with stronger intentions to act collectively, both directly and indirectly through stronger identification with feminists, and we found a significant association between identification with feminists and collective action intentions (even though, differently from our hypotheses, we did not find the same effect for identification with women). Further to this, perceiving gender inequality as more illegitimate was related to more collective action intentions, and these beliefs moderated

some relationships between perceptions of inequality and social identification. To confirm and further explore these findings, Study 7 was conducted focusing on the effects of perceived gender inequalities on social identification and collective action intentions in a different cultural context, namely Turkey.

Study 7

In Turkey, the landscape of gender inequalities is shaped by a combination of historical, cultural, and socio-political factors, presenting a distinctive context for the study of these issues. Despite strides towards equality, patriarchal norms remain rather explicit and deeply ingrained, influencing women's roles and experiences across diverse regions (Parlak et al., 2021), and the intersection of Islamic values and cultural expectations further contributes to the complexities of gender dynamics in Turkey (Bugay et al., 2021; Karaman, 2021). Gender-based violence is a persistent concern, alongside inequalities in both paid and unpaid work (Bahadir-Yilmaz & Öz, 2018; Bakirci, 2018).

Although Turkey had witnessed a surge in women's activism that contributed to the Gezi Park protests, in which half of the participants were women (Acar & Uluğ, 2016; Uluğ & Acar, 2018) – subsequent political developments have made it hard to protest in Turkey, and demonstrations are often met with police brutality (The New Arab, 2018; Uluğ et al., 2020). This intricate tapestry of gender disparities in Turkey provides a unique context to explore how perceptions of these inequalities influence women's identification with other women and with feminists and engagement in collective action.

Method

As in Study 6, self-identified women older than 18 years old were invited to participate in an online study on women’s perceptions and experiences of gender inequalities. Participants were recruited through the research credits system at the third author’s institution

and received one credit for their participation. Furthermore, participants were invited to share the questionnaire with other people. Data were collected during spring 2022. After excluding those participants who failed more than one attention check out of three (n = 43), the final sample was made up of 604 women (M_{age} = 24.57, SD_{age} = 7.05, min = 18, max = 56). Of these, 571 participants completed the Turkish version of the questionnaire and 33 took the English version.

With regards to nationality, most of the sample self-described as Turkish (n = 554; 91.4%), 12 as Kurdish (2%), 8 as Turkmens (1.3%), 6 as Moroccan (1%), 6 as Yemenis (1%) and the remaining 3.2% of the sample was composed by people of other nationalities (Arabs, Iranians, Syrians, Tunisians, Azerbaijani, Bosnian, Armenian, Ethiopian, Jordanian and three people who did not disclose their nationality). In terms of religious affiliation, the vast majority was Muslim (N=543, 89.9%), 10 reported endorsing Deism (1.7%), 6 were atheist (1%) and the residual 7.6% reported other religious beliefs (agnostic, Catholic, Jewish, Orthodox Christian, other religion) and thirty people preferred not to indicate their religion.

Regarding sexual orientation, the largest part of our sample was straight (n = 544, 90.1%), 15 were bisexual (2.5%), 6 were pansexual (1.0%), and the remaining 6.4% either declared other sexual orientations (asexual, gay) or preferred not to disclose this information (n = 31). Last, in terms of education, 6 had completed primary school only (1%), 14 middle schools (2.3%), 284 had completed secondary school (47%), 100 had completed their bachelor's degree (16.6%), 177 had done a first-level master's course (29.3%), 17 a master's degree (2.8%) and 6 preferred not to say (1%).

Materials

The questionnaire contained the same measures as Study 6. Because the study was advertised in a Turkish university attended by some international students with limited

knowledge of Turkish, participants could choose whether to answer the questionnaire in Turkish or English. As for the Turkish version, all measures were (back-)translated from English. We measured perceptions of gender inequalities – with the four subscales of perceptions of workplace inequalities (α = 70), domestic unbalance (α = .54), social expectations (α = .82), and harassment towards women (α = .69) – perceived illegitimacy of gender inequalities (α = .83; r = .71, p < .001), social identification with women and with feminists, collective action intentions (α = .88; r = .79, p < .001) and political orientation. At last, participants answered some demographic questions. Seeing the low alpha-score of the subscale of domestic inequality, possibly indicating scarce reliability, we decided to run a CFA on the perceptions of gender inequalities scale to further examine the reliability of this scale, and the fit indices were excellent, with *RMSEA* = 0.042 (90% *CI* [0.034, 0.050]), *CFI* = 0.945, *TLI* = 0.933, and *SRMR* = 0.042. This provides sufficient reasons to retain the subscale despite the low alpha, which might be due to the subscale having only three items. Furthermore, some authors posit that a Cronbach's alpha larger than .50 is acceptable for a 3-item measure (Pallant, 2020).

Results

All descriptive statistics and correlations among measures are presented in Table 3-3.

Table 3-3.

Means, standard deviations, and correlations between all variables in Study 7.

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Domestic Imbalance	5.27	1.30								
2. Workplace Inequality	5.43	1.09	.45***							
3. Harassment towards Women	6.13	0.87	.46***	.59***						
4. Social Expectations	5.12	1.42	.56***	.58***	.63***					

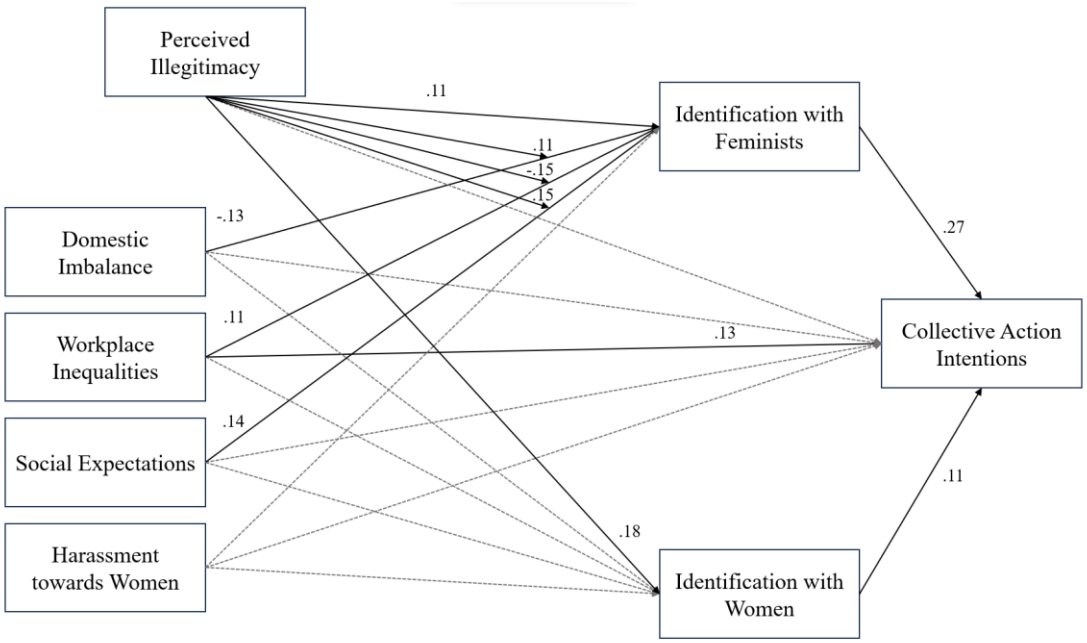
5. Perceived Illegitimacy	6.20	1.36	.05	.15***	.22***	.09*				
6. Identification with Feminists	4.82	1.53	.03	.21***	.20***	.20***	.16***			
7. Identification with Women	6.03	0.97	.08*	.08*	.15***	.10*	.19***	.32***		
8. Collective Action Intentions	5.20	1.56	.01	.19***	.14***	.11**	.08	.38***	.20***	
9. Political Orientation	39.70	29.58	.03	-.11**	-.11**	-.06	-.17***	-.22***	-.02	-.32***

Note. ***p < .01, **p < .01, *p < .05.

As in the previous study, we run the same model using the Maximum Likelihood with Robust standard errors (MLR) estimator. The path analysis model demonstrated an acceptable fit: *RMSEA* = 0.052, 90% *CI* [0.038, 0.067], *CFI* = 0.946, *TLI* = 0.870, and *SRMR* = 0.064. The TLI was slightly below the cutoff of .90, but because the other indexes, especially the CFI, were good, this does not pose a threat to the validity of the model. See Figure 3-3 for a graphical representation of the path analysis model with all significant paths.

Figure 3-3.

Graphical representation of the path analysis model (Study 7).



Note. Non-significant paths are dashed. Estimates refer to standardized values.

Direct and indirect effects of the path analysis are provided in Table 3-4. Regarding identification with women, perceived illegitimacy was a significant predictor, indicating that women who perceived gender inequalities as more illegitimate identified more strongly with other women. In this study, perceiving inequality was not associated with identification with women, disconfirming Hypothesis 1a. Social identification with feminists was positively influenced by perceptions of workplace inequality and social expectations (in support of Hypothesis 1b), while domestic imbalance had a negative impact. In other words, perceiving more workplace gender inequalities and societal expectations for women, coupled with perceiving fewer inequalities in the domestic sphere, led to stronger identification with feminists. Perceived illegitimacy was also significantly associated with feminist identification so that perceiving greater illegitimacy was associated with a stronger identification with feminists.

Table 3-4.

Direct and indirect effects of the path analysis model (Study 7).

Effect	Standardized Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Direct Effects					
Collective Action Intentions					
Work Inequalities	.13	.047	.035	.218	.007
Domestic Imbalance	-.06	.043	-.141	.028	.189
Harassment towards Women	.02	.046	-.072	.110	.690
Social Expectations	-.02	.047	-.117	.068	.609
Identification with Women	.11	.041	.032	.194	.006
Identification with Feminists	.27	.042	.189	.355	.000
Perceived Illegitimacy	-.04	.037	-.116	.028	.229
Political Orientation	-.25	.038	-.325	-.176	.000
Identification with Feminists					
Work Inequalities	.11	.054	.005	.217	.040
Domestic Imbalance	-.13	.049	-.228	.036	.007
Harassment towards Women	.08	.058	-.028	.197	.143
Social Expectations	.14	.056	.034	.253	.010
Perceived Illegitimacy	.11	.040	.027	.185	.009

Work Ineq. x Perceived Illegitimacy	-.15	.057	-.260	-.036	.010
Domestic Imb. x Perceived Illegitimacy	.11	.040	.026	.208	.009
Harassment x Perceived Illegitimacy	.15	.062	.026	.270	.017
Expectations x Perceived Illegitimacy	-.10	.063	-.223	.022	.109
Political Orientation	-.17	.042	-.250	-.086	.000
Identification with Women					
Work Inequalities	-.03	.048	-.123	.067	.564
Domestic Imbalance	.02	.048	-.072	.116	.651
Harassment towards Women	.10	.059	-.021	.212	.108
Social Expectations	.03	.051	-.068	.131	.533
Perceived Illegitimacy	.18	.044	.091	.264	.000
Work Ineq. x Perceived Illegitimacy	-.03	.071	-.171	.107	.655
Domestic Imb. x Perceived Illegitimacy	.05	.062	-.070	.172	.410
Harassment x Perceived Illegitimacy	< -.01	.089	-.177	.171	.976
Expectations x Perceived Illegitimacy	-.048	.062	-.159	.082	.536
Political Orientation	.02	.042	-.068	.097	.000
Perceived Illegitimacy					
Political Orientation	-.17	.042	-.253	-.087	.000
Work Inequalities					
Political Orientation	-.101	.041	-.187	-.029	.008
Domestic Imbalance					
Political Orientation	.03	.040	-.046	.111	.420
Harassment towards women					
Political Orientation	-.11	.038	-.186	-.038	.003
Social Expectations					
Political Orientation	-.06	.041	-.144	.018	.128
Indirect Effects					
Work Ineq. > Fem. Id > Coll. Action	.03	.015	.000	.060	.047
Work Ineq. > Wom. Id > Coll. Action	< -.01	.005	-.014	.008	.564
Domestic Imb. > Fem. Id > Coll. Action	-.04	.015	-.065	-.007	.015
Domestic Imb. > Wom. Id > Coll. Action	< .01	.006	-.008	.013	.659
Harassment > Fem. Id > Coll. Action	.02	.016	-.008	.054	.151
Harassment > Wom. Id > Coll. Action	.01	.007	-.003	.025	.136
Expectations > Fem. Id > Coll. Action	.04	.017	.006	.072	.019
Expectations > Wom. Id > Coll. Action	< .01	.006	-.008	.015	.551

Note. Standardized estimates, standard errors, confidence intervals, and p-values of all direct and indirect effects investigated in the model. Significant predictors and associations are bolded.

Furthermore, perceived illegitimacy significantly moderated the relationship between perceptions of workplace inequality and feminist identification – as those who perceived

workplace inequality as more justifiable had a stronger link between workplace inequality perception and feminist identification (Figure 3-4); perception of domestic imbalance and feminist identification – so that the negative relationship between perceiving inequality in the domestic sphere and identifying as feminists was particularly pronounced among those who perceived such inequality as rather legitimate (Figure 3-5); and perception of harassment towards women and feminist identification – so that perceiving harassment towards women predicted stronger feminist identification, but only among those who perceived gender inequality as more unjust (Figure 3-6).

Figure 3-4.

Graphical representation of the moderation analysis of perceived illegitimacy on the association between perceptions of workplace inequalities and feminist identification.

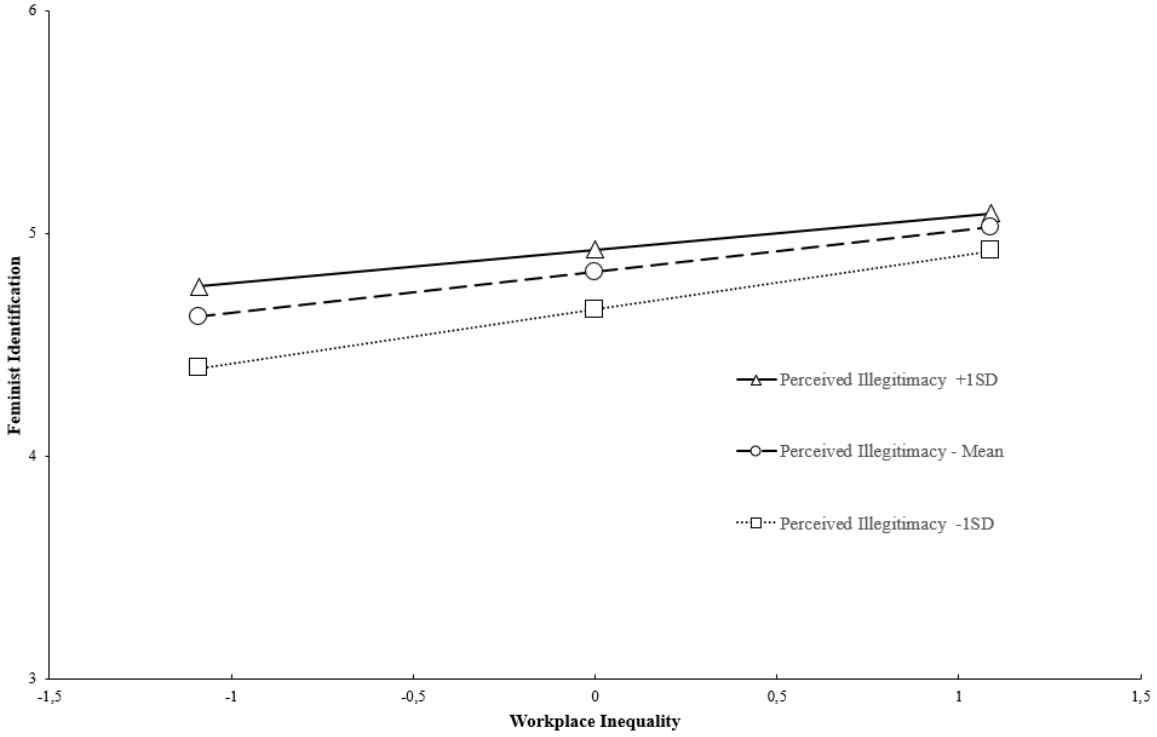


Figure 3-5.

Graphical representation of the moderation analysis of perceived illegitimacy on the association between perceptions of domestic imbalance and feminist identification.

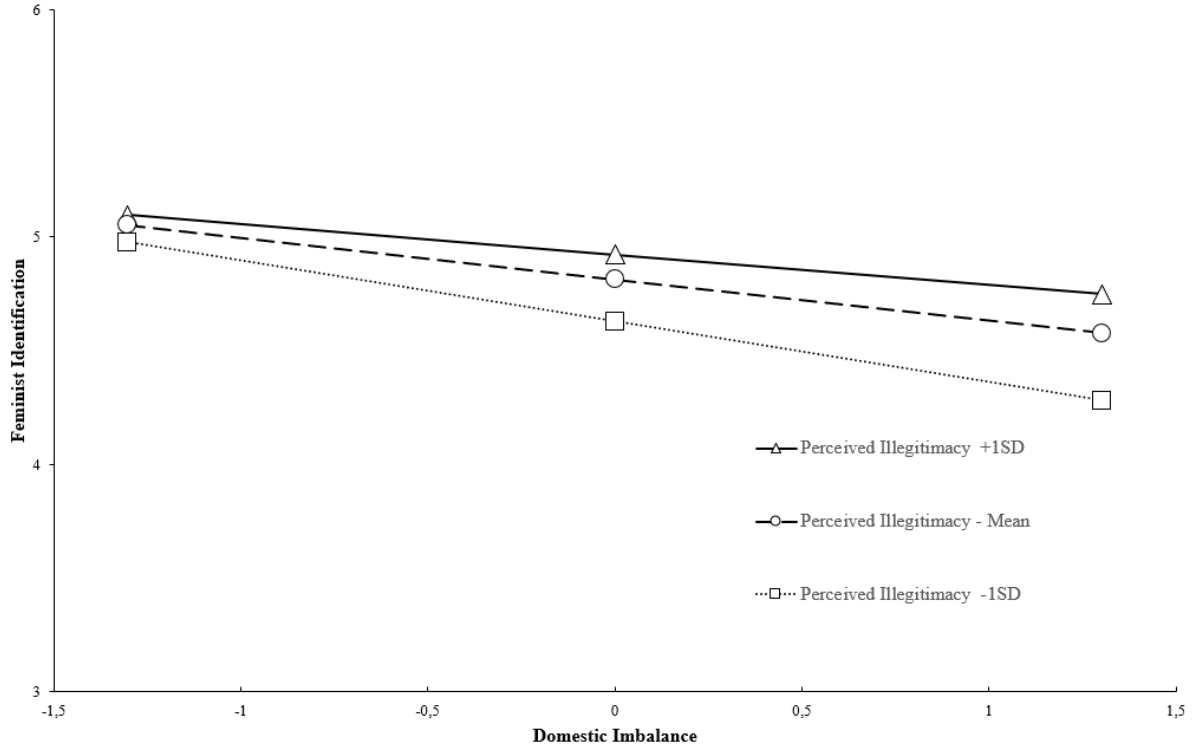
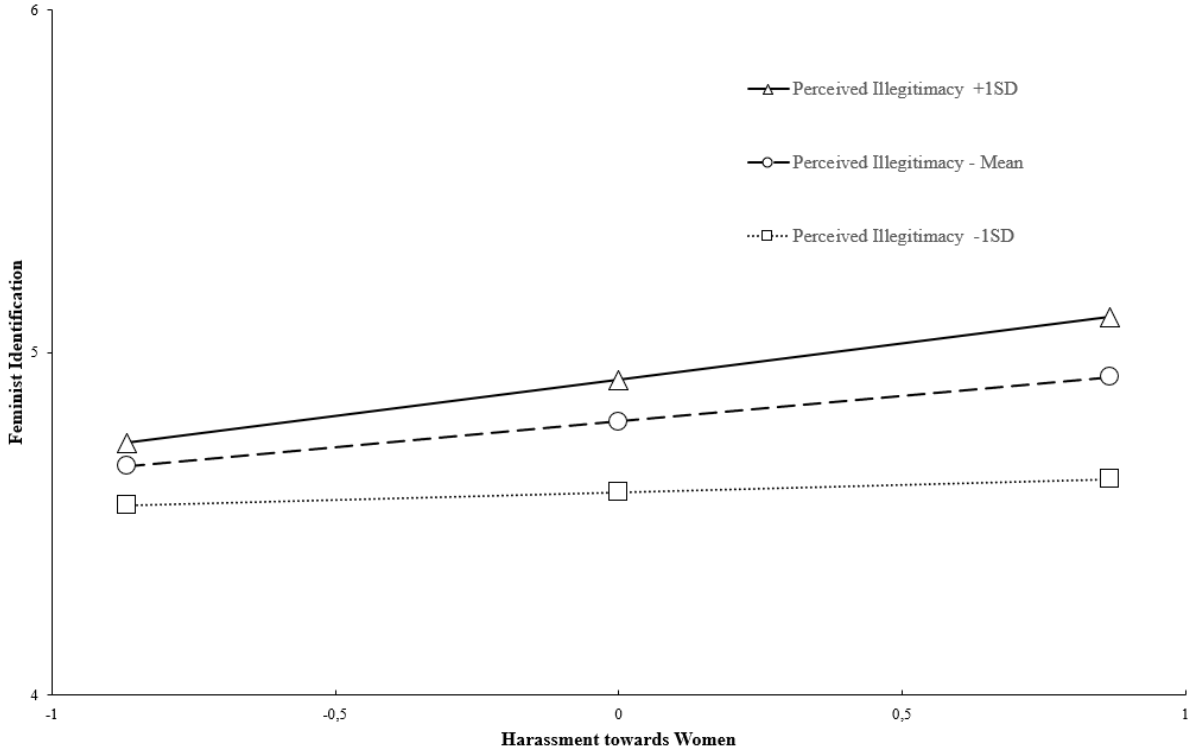


Figure 3-6.

Graphical representation of the moderation analysis of perceived illegitimacy on the association between perceptions of harassment towards women and feminist identification.



In line with our previous findings, perceptions of workplace inequalities were, among the different domains of inequalities, the only significant driver to have a direct effect on collective action intentions, thus supporting Hypothesis 2. However, when looking at indirect effects, we found a significant and positive effect of social expectations through feminist identification and a significant and negative effect of domestic imbalance through feminist identification. The indirect effect of workplace inequality perceptions on collective action intentions through feminist identification, though seemingly significant based on p-values, was found to be non-significant when considering the confidence interval. Interestingly, perceived illegitimacy did not significantly predict collective action intentions. Additionally, participants' political orientation played a role, with those identifying as more left-wing demonstrating greater collective action intentions.

Furthermore, identification with women and with feminists were positively associated with collective action intentions, supporting Hypotheses 3a and 3b.

Discussion

Study 7 examined the relationship between perceptions of gender inequalities, social identification with women and feminists, perceived illegitimacy, and collective action intentions among women in Turkey. The results of this study largely replicated the findings of Study 6, although showing some different patterns. With respect to the rejection-identification hypothesis, the findings of this study provided only partial support. Perceiving gender inequalities was not related to the extent to which women identified with other women, while the results were more nuanced when examining social identification with feminists. Specifically, when women perceived more gender inequality in the domains of workplace inequalities and social expectations they tended to identify more strongly with feminists; however, this pattern was reversed considering the domain of household inequality,

such that when women perceived more domestic imbalance they identified less with feminists.

The moderating effect of perceived illegitimacy can help to better understand these results. For women who perceived gender inequalities to be somewhat legitimate compared to those who already thought of gender inequalities as illegitimate, perceiving more workplace inequalities led to even stronger identification with feminists, and perceiving more household inequalities led to less identification with feminists. Differently, only for those women who perceived gender inequalities to be illegitimate, perceiving more harassment towards women led to stronger identification with feminists.

Additionally, perceiving higher workplace inequalities was associated with stronger intentions to act collectively for gender equality, both directly and indirectly through stronger identification with feminists. Perceiving gendered social expectations too had a positive effect on collective action intentions, fully mediated by stronger identification with feminists. On the contrary, perceiving more household inequality had a negative direct association with collective action intentions as well as an indirect effect through less social identification with feminists. Besides, women who identified more strongly with other women and with feminists tended to support collective action for gender equality more strongly. Notably, thinking of gender inequalities as legitimate or illegitimate was not associated with women's intentions to engage in collective action in and on itself.

General Discussion

Across two correlational studies, we investigated whether perceiving gender inequalities – along its multiple dimensions – is associated with women strengthening social identification with other women and with feminists, and if this builds up to collective action intentions in favor of gender equality. Overall, except for the dimension of domestic

imbalance – we found evidence for a positive relationship between the perception of gender inequalities and social identification, especially with identification with feminists. Showing that women responded to the appraisal of inequality through a stronger social identification with their gender group and especially with the relevant politicized group, these findings align neatly with the rejection-identification hypothesis (Branscombe et al., 1999) and provide great insights into the identity dynamics involved with disadvantaged groups and the taking on a politicized identity.

More in detail, Study 6 – conducted among women in Italy – showed that women identified more strongly with other women when they perceived more workplace gender inequalities and that they identified more with feminists when perceiving more workplace inequalities and harassment towards women. Furthermore, participants intended to support collective action more when they perceived more workplace inequalities, identified with feminists and with women, perceived gender inequalities to be more illegitimate, and were more left-wing leaning.

Study 7, conducted in Turkey, exhibited some similarities to the interplay of variables observed in Study 6 but also revealed a distinct pattern. Specifically, we found no evidence in support of a rejection-identification hypothesis for identification with women, as women's identification with their ingroup was independent of their perceptions of gender inequalities (but it increased with increased perception of illegitimacy of such inequalities). However, we did find support for the rejection-identification hypothesis for identification with feminists, which increased as perceptions of workplace inequalities and social expectations increased, and – surprisingly at first – perceptions of domestic imbalance decreased. Furthermore, in this study, women supported collective action for gender equality more when they perceived more workplace inequalities, identified more strongly with other women and with feminists, and were politically more left-wing oriented.

We also uncovered three indirect effects: greater perceptions of workplace gender inequalities and social expectations were associated with stronger intentions to support collective action through stronger feminist identification, while greater perceptions of domestic imbalance were associated with weaker collective action intentions through weaker feminist identification.

Taken together, these two studies seem to show that when holding information about group inequality, identification with the ingroup (i.e., identification with women) and, even more so, identification with the relevant politicized group (i.e., feminists) can be viable strategies to cope with the disadvantage that the group experience. The findings imply that increased group identification serves as a valuable asset for individuals in addressing collective disadvantages, and one of the ways in which this process helps is by fostering collective action to bring about positive change. This is evidenced by the positive relationship observed between these forms of identification—especially with feminists—and collective action intentions.

Theoretical Implications

This research carries notable theoretical implications, unraveling threads that can benefit gender inequality research and prompt further scholarly inquiry. In fact, besides presenting evidence supporting the rejection-identification hypothesis (Branscombe et al., 1999) – especially with regards to how this is associated with feminist identification – this research raises important considerations and leaves inquiries unresolved concerning the influence of various components of gender inequalities, perceived illegitimacy, and the social context in which studies are conducted.

Different Components of Gender Inequalities Have Different Effects

A further takeaway that emerges from this research is the importance of differentiating different facets of gender inequalities, as they elicit different psychological reactions. For instance, across both studies, perceptions of workplace gender inequalities emerged as a key predictor of identification with feminists, and collective action intentions. Compared to the other dimensions, workplace and economic gender inequalities are likely to be perceived as the more structural aspect of gender inequality, and hence call for more structural and collective solutions (Klebl & Jetten, 2023).

In contrast, perceptions of domestic imbalance had a completely different effect. In line with previous research that showed that workplace inequalities led to anger and disdain while perceptions of domestic imbalance led to resignation (see Chapter 2), in Study 7 we found that perceiving domestic imbalance had a sedative effect on collective action intentions. This may be because higher perceptions of inequalities in private domains, such as that of domestic imbalance, may fuel discouragement and skepticism about true social change.

Alternatively, this pattern could be attributed to domestic imbalance being a less publicly discussed component of gender inequalities, and potentially perceived as more widespread by those very women who more strongly conform to traditional gender roles, possibly more aligned with traditional views and less supportive of feminist ideals. In contrast, liberal women, observing a more balanced distribution of household chores in their social circles, might perceive domestic imbalance as less pervasive. Future research should further explore these explanations and investigate the conditions under which perceptions of gender inequalities in the domestic sphere prompt women to support social change.

The Role of Legitimacy Perceptions

The central findings of these two studies speak to the importance of simultaneously accounting for both perceptions of inequality and perceived illegitimacy. In fact, people are motivated to react to inequality not simply when they see it, but also – and especially – when they perceive it as unfair (Dare & Jetten, 2022). Although these constructs are often intertwined, they represent distinct dimensions, and it appears crucial, especially in the context of gender, to take both into account. For example, in Study 7 perceived illegitimacy was related to all dimensions of gender inequalities, except for domestic imbalance. This indicates that recognizing women's continued responsibility for most household chores compared to men was not necessarily associated with the perception of gender inequalities as more unfair. In line with prior research (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018; Ogolsky et al., 2014), the distinct pattern observed for domestic imbalance, in contrast to another dimension like workplace inequality, suggests that domestic inequalities might be the most normalized and, at times, not even acknowledged as inequalities.

Moreover, perceived illegitimacy predicted social identification with women and feminists, across both studies and collective action intentions in Study 6, highlighting the crucial role of considering such a variable. Particularly noteworthy is the moderating role of perceived illegitimacy in shaping the relationship between perceiving inequality and social identification with feminists. In Study 6, for women who see inequalities as rather legitimate, perceiving more gender inequalities in the domain of social expectations led to stronger identification with feminists, in comparison to women who perceived inequalities to be illegitimate. This suggests that an increase in awareness around gendered social expectations proved more advantageous in reinforcing social identification with feminists for women who tended to legitimize inequalities.

Conversely, women who appraised gender inequalities to be more illegitimate, already exhibited stronger identification with feminists, and, even with lower perceptions of gender inequalities their feminist identification was higher. The same pattern emerged in Study 7, whereby perceiving more workplace inequalities was a stronger catalyst toward identification with feminists for those women who perceived inequalities to be more legitimate.

The reverse was true for the moderation on perceptions of domestic imbalance and identification with feminists: while higher awareness of household inequalities led all women to identify less with feminists, this effect was particularly pronounced among those women who tended to legitimize inequalities, while women's levels of identification with feminists stayed higher for those women who perceived inequalities to be more illegitimate.

A distinct scenario emerged with respect to the moderation of the relationship between perceiving harassment towards women and identification with feminists. Here, higher perceptions of harassment towards women led to higher feminist identification only for those women who perceived inequalities to be illegitimate. Perhaps, people who legitimize gender inequalities may call for different solutions other than social identification with feminists to the problem of harassment, such as for example men's protection (Agadullina et al., 2022; Glick & Fiske, 1997). In summary, these findings underscore the importance of considering both perceptions of inequality and perceived illegitimacy in understanding women's responses to gender inequalities.

Does the Where Matter? Reflecting on Contextual Influences

The role of context is crucial in social psychology research, as the specifics of psychological processes are influenced by the social, legislative, political, and economic context of participants (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). This is especially true when examining participants' identification with people of certain politicized movements, such as the feminist

movement, which may have distinct historical trajectories in different countries, or when asking how likely they are to join some forms of collective action, that have different costs in different countries. For instance, in one of the too few attempts to consider the role of contextual influences on participation in collective action, Odağ et al. (2023) analyzed activists' experience behind collective action in Turkey and Germany. Not only they found that the perceived costs of collective action were higher in Turkey, but that even the idea of collective action efficacy varied in the two contexts, whereby in Turkey it was related to creating a movement that could establish itself, while in Germany it was tighter to the making of a political change. Similarly, the appraisal of inequality can vary too: can the same condition be considered inequality in one context and not in another context? The goal of this research was not to draw direct comparisons between countries with differing sociocultural factors but to shed light on the underlying processes through which women build social identities and support change.

Although we found evidence supporting the rejection-identification hypothesis in both contexts - in particular, with the politicized group, some differences between the two emerged too. For instance, perceived illegitimacy was directly associated with collective action intentions in the Italian study but not in the Turkish study. One could speculate that this finding may echo recent historical events in Turkey. In fact, in June 2021, a few months before data collection for Study 7 started, women marched in Istanbul and other major Turkish cities to protest Turkey's withdrawal from the Istanbul Convention, an international treaty to fight violence against women. All of these were shut down after a couple of hours when the police dispersed the crowds with tear gas (Bullens, 2021; Fahim, 2021). Hence, the fact that these protests were met with severe backlash may surely impact people's intentions to join other collective actions and may also help to explain why perceiving that gender inequalities are illegitimate may not, alone, be directly associated with collective action

intentions in such context, raising questions on both efficacy beliefs and costs of action in collective action research.

As psychometric testing of these considerations falls outside the scope of this research, we need to acknowledge that these considerations lack empirical support, that hopefully future research can deepen. Nevertheless, the significance of context in social psychology research cannot be overstated, and cultivating an inquisitive approach toward cultural and legislative nuances is imperative, as they undeniably shape individuals' psychological responses to inequality (Easterbrook, 2021).

Practical Implications

This research underscores the need for context-sensitive interventions in campaigns aimed at enhancing women's participation in collective action initiatives supporting gender equality. Recognizing that the social context significantly shapes women's perceptions and reactions to various forms of gender inequalities, it is crucial to implement interventions that are attuned to specific contextual nuances to mitigate the possible risks of backlash. The findings highlight that fostering awareness of gender inequalities in the workplace is a key factor conducive to women's engagement in collective action across both studied contexts.

Similarly, promoting feminist identification proves effective in enhancing women's intentions to participate in collective actions. Information about gender inequalities can – and should – be increased to bring about more participation in movements for equality. However, policymakers should be cautious in selecting the type of information to disseminate, as the effectiveness of this information varies between contexts. In Italy, issues such as harassment towards women, workplace inequalities, and, to a lesser extent, social expectations can be leveraged to foster identification with feminists. In contrast, in Turkey, emphasis on

workplace inequalities, social expectations, and to a limited extent, harassment towards women is more conducive to promoting identification with feminists.

Furthermore, given the pivotal role of social identification in garnering collective action intentions, campaigns are advised to prioritize interactive spaces—whether physical (e.g., meetings) or online (e.g., communities) over traditional reading materials (e.g., pamphlets, social media posts). Creating such spaces may foster a stronger sense of community, facilitating interpersonal interactions that can significantly contribute to strengthening collective action intentions initiatives.

Limitations and Future Directions

In considering the limitations and potential avenues for future research, we highlighted three main aspects. First, considering that adopting a multidimensional assessment of gender inequalities allowed us to seize more nuances than a unidimensional approach would have, and considering the different strengths of the relationships between different components of gender inequalities and the composite measure of illegitimacy of gender inequalities, future research should adopt a more ingrained approach to the analysis of legitimacy perceptions. For instance, future studies should consider how legitimate or illegitimate each aspect of gender inequality is appraised.

Second, while the nuanced exploration of gender inequalities has advanced our understanding of women's reactions, there remains an urgent need for an intersectional approach to comprehensively grasp the varied experiences of individuals with multiple identities, to ensure a more just analysis of inequalities. Last, one more limitation lies in the reliance on two cross-sectional studies, preventing causal inferences. To address this, future studies should employ experimental (see Chapter 4) or longitudinal designs for a more robust examination of the observed patterns.

Conclusion

In summary, these findings emphasize how recognizing gender inequalities can strengthen women's social identification, particularly with feminists, leading to collective action in support of gender equality. This highlights how – under conditions of inequality – relevant groups have the capacity to represent a fundamental aspect, that on top of being beneficial for well-being as shown by previous research, can also get together to improve the group conditions. This research demonstrates that increased awareness of gender-based inequalities, coupled with perceptions of their unfairness, motivates women to rally around their politicized group and strive for systemic change. In a world where gender equality remains elusive and where multiple gender groups are suffering the dictates of a patriarchal system, emphasizing not only awareness but also prompting reflections on the fairness of these issues becomes crucial to unlocking the collective power for transformative change.

Chapter 4

Behind Closed Doors: Unravelling the Influence of Domestic Gender Imbalance in Social Change Support[3]

[3] Ciaffoni, S., Jetten, J., Rubini, M. & Moscatelli, S. (2023). Behind Closed Doors: Unravelling the Influence of Domestic Gender Imbalance in Social Change Support. *Manuscript in preparation*.

Abstract

To untangle the effects of different components of gender inequalities, this study examined the nuanced impact of workplace gender inequalities and domestic imbalances on women's collective action intentions. Employing a 2 (workplace inequality: low, high) × 2 (domestic inequality: low, high) experimental design, we investigated the effects on social identification with women and feminists, support for collective and private action in favor of equality among 293 straight women living with their partner in the UK. The manipulation effectively altered specific perceptions of gender inequalities but did not significantly affect the overall perception of gender inequalities. Thus, we ran a series of path analyses to test whether perceptions of gender inequalities mediated the impact of manipulated workplace and domestic inequalities on social identification and collective action intentions. The results showed that manipulated domestic inequality had a positive effect on both collective and private action intentions through increased perceptions of domestic inequality, but no such effect was found for the manipulation of workplace gender inequalities. Furthermore, we found no indirect effects of the manipulation on social identification with women and with feminists. The findings underscore the importance of considering multiple aspects of gender inequalities in shaping individuals' responses. Notably, the observed cross-country variation between these findings from the UK, the most gender-equal country in this PhD research, and the other countries investigated in previous work suggest cultural, social, and contextual factors influencing gender-related issues and contributing to divergent predictive patterns across different world regions, which emphasizes the need for a context-specific approach when studying and addressing gender-related issues globally.

Keywords: gender equality, inequality perception, rejection-identification, feminist identification, collective action

Introduction

Globally, women face significant disparities across several life domains, and workplace inequalities and domestic inequalities certainly represent core aspects of such disparities (World Economic Forum, 2023). Workplace inequalities represent a structural aspect that can only change if structural changes are made at the country level, whereas the domestic imbalance disfavoring women could mostly be tackled with the endorsement of more egalitarian norms around domestic and caring responsibilities. Yet, of domestic inequality is an aspect that is very resistant to change, and even in countries that are more gender equal in terms of workplace opportunities women are still very much in charge of most household responsibilities (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018; World Economic Forum, 2023). One of the reasons that can explain this resistance to change is that domestic inequality is such a natural result of the so deeply ingrained gender stereotypes that people, including women, often do not even perceive it as an aspect of gender inequality (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018).

As no study has analyzed the differential impact of either component of gender inequalities, in the current research, we investigated how information about workplace and domestic gender inequalities influences women's perceptions of those issues, their social identification processes, and their support for gender equality actions. Informed by the Rejection-identification model (Branscombe et al., 1999) we expected that higher perceptions of inequalities would lead women to identify more with both women and feminists and – based on the collective action research (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021) – we expected that higher perceptions of inequalities would result in stronger support for social change. Furthermore, we also considered the role of legitimacy perceptions – beliefs about how fair and justifiable gender inequalities are.

Outside and Inside the House: Workplace and Domestic Gender Inequalities

Two of the most prominent aspects of gender inequalities pertain to workplace gender inequality and domestic gender inequality. In the pursuit of their professional life, women encounter many more obstacles than men, reflecting the presence of patriarchal structures that still render the workplace a hostile field for women. For instance, the gender pay gap – the difference between women's and men's payroll that remains even after accounting for job type and education of the employee – is still a thing of the present (Bishu & Alkadry, 2017; World Economic Forum, 2023). Worldwide, women still largely remain in lower-status and lower-paid jobs, and less than forty percent of women hold leadership roles (World Economic Forum, 2023). However, while these and other statistics provide tools for a first understanding of the phenomenon, they fall short of a comprehensive understanding of such inequalities (see Ryan, 2023 for a more complete analysis).

Several allegorical theoretical frameworks in sociology and social psychology have informed our current understanding of gender inequalities, from the sticky floor (Harlan & White Berheide, 1994), the leaky pipeline (Cronin & Roger, 1999) to the glass ceiling (Cotter et al., 2001), the glass cliff phenomena (Ryan & Haslam, 2005, 2007), and the perfection bias (Moscatelli et al., 2020) – and while presenting several different perspectives, they all converge in two nodes. First, they show how workplace systems systematically prevent women from sustainably accessing higher-status positions (Bishu & Alkadry, 2017). Second, they reflect on how the prevalence of gender stereotypes by which women are warm and men are competent to reinforce workplace inequalities (e.g., Heilman, 2012).

Similarly, stereotypical representations of women as warm, caring, patient, and almost intrinsically more suited for housekeeping and caregiving play a central role in explaining why women are still responsible for most care responsibility and unpaid work within the household, even though most women nowadays also have a job (e.g., Pailhé et al., 2021).

Domestic gender inequalities also have negative consequences for women, resulting in increased stress, lower job satisfaction (Amato et al., 2007; Gutek et al., 1991) and ultimately limiting their opportunities for education, career advancement, and social and economic equality (Bianchi et al., 2000; Milkie et al., 2002).

In sum, these inequalities perpetuate a cycle of gender inequality, as women's domestic responsibilities may constrain their ability to achieve parity with men in the workplace and vice versa (Hill et al., 2001). Despite the widespread issue around domestic gender inequalities, these imbalances often become so deeply ingrained that people, including women, do not even perceive them as unjust (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018). In consideration of this, this research investigated how perceiving gender inequalities in these two domains of workplace and domestic gender inequalities affect women's identity processes and support for social change.

Perceiving Inequality and Social Identification

Members of disadvantaged groups, including women, are likely to experience and encounter discrimination in a variety of domains, both directed at them as members of their group (personal discrimination) and as discrimination directed at their group (Ellemers, 2002; Klonoff & Landrine, 1995; van Zomeren et al., 2008). Social Identity Theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1979) posits that perceiving an illegitimate disadvantage to an ingroup can enhance one's connection to that ingroup. Extending SIT, the rejection-identification model (Branscombe et al., 1999) suggests that – while recognizing widespread discrimination against one's ingroup results in poor well-being – increased identification with that ingroup may buffer against the adverse effects of perceived discrimination. According to this theoretical model, such identification fulfills the needs for acceptance, belonging, and meaning-making in the social world, contributing positively to psychological well-being (Branscombe et al., 1999; Brugger, 2021; Giamo et al., 2012).

In the rejection-identification research tradition, only a limited number of studies have explored the role of group-level discrimination, revealing intriguing findings (Armenta & Hunt, 2009; Balkaya et al., 2019; Stuart et al., 2020). Notably, a study on British Muslims (Stuart et al., 2020) found that increased perception of group discrimination against Muslims was associated with stronger Muslim identity, while personal discrimination as a Muslim diminished British identification and correlated with increased depressive symptoms – highlighting a rejection-identification effect for group discrimination, and not for personal discrimination.

Moreover, existing research has primarily focused on the impact of discrimination and identification with the ingroup, neglecting its effects on politicized identification. As explained in more detail in the previous chapter, in the context of women supporting gender equality, this politicized identity may be assimilated into a feminist identification (Radke et al., 2016). Therefore, our research investigated how perceptions of group discrimination – specifically, gender inequalities affecting women – contribute to social identification with women and feminists.

We See, Therefore We Fight: Perceived Inequality Leads to Support for Social Change

What do group members do when they perceive that their group is subject to inequality? One of the things they may do is to get together and try to change their social status (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021). In fact, in the context of gender inequalities, women may compare their group with the largest and most privileged gender group (i.e., men), and when they think that the situation is illegitimate, they may experience anger and resentment and conclude that they should receive better treatment. This is the central notion of Relative Deprivation Theory (Runciman, 1966; Stouffer et al., 1949) which posits that when people, after making an intergroup comparison, conclude that their group is unfairly being denied the deserved treatment they will experience group relative deprivation, which is a booster for

support for social change. Also, SIT explains social protests in light of an intergroup comparison (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In this case, taking part in protests appears as an identity management strategy by which people, appraising that one's group is a victim of inequality, will strive to restore a positive group image, especially when the disadvantage is seen as illegitimate and changeable (Turner et al., 1987). In general terms, there is a large consensus over the role of perceiving inequality in explaining why people challenge the status quo. In particular, research focused mostly on collective action, defined as any voluntary behavior aiming at disrupting the status quo and improving the conditions of a disadvantaged group, such as lobbying, striking, or signing a petition. This central claim has been made by different theoretical models, which aside of their specificities, explain people's collective action intentions, such as SIMCA (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; van Zomeren et al., 2008), SIRDE (Grant et al., 2015) and EMSICA, (Thomas et al., 2009).

While collective action, when successful, helps the entire group move forward and may be the best strategy in solving inequality, it surely takes time and effort (Hornsey et al., 2006; Louis, 2009). It may be the case then, that people can also try to do something about the disadvantages in their daily lives. Some gender researchers have indeed argued that because of women's historical marginalization from public decision making organs, daily actions (such as confronting a sexist comment, or educating oneself about gender) can and should be considered political statements, which, in a complementary way to traditional collective actions, ultimately support social change (Miron et al., 2022; Savaş & Stewart, 2019). Therefore, in this research we also looked at "private action", as behaviors that can be performed by single individuals which, while not necessarily solving the structural issue in the long run, may alleviate the unequal conditions for the single group members. For instance, endorsing egalitarian stands with respect to the role of mothers and fathers, taking paternity leave and being willing to share caring duties may be all examples of such private

action (Kosakowska-Berezecka et al., 2016). However, these types of actions have been seriously overlooked in research.

The Present Study

The current research examined whether perceiving workplace and domestic gender inequalities influence women's social identification processes and their intentions to engage in collective and private action in favor of gender equality. By private action we mean a behavior that can be performed within one's household to try and demand for a more equitable division of household chores, for instance by having a conversation with the men in the house about taking on more domestic responsibilities. To ensure relevance, the study specifically focuses on straight women cohabiting with their partners, a condition that implies shared living spaces and family responsibilities with a significant adult man (i.e., not a roommate and not a son). Participants – all self-identified women living in the UK – were exposed to a bogus journal article that contained information about (high vs. low) workplace gender inequalities and (high vs. low) domestic gender inequalities in the UK. Participants rated their perceptions of workplace, domestic and general gender inequalities, their legitimacy perceptions, their social identification with women and with feminists, and their intentions to support collective action (e.g., participating in a march against gender inequality) and private action (e.g., having a conversation with their man partner to distribute household chores more equally). The novelty of this research lies in disentangling the effects of perceived domestic inequalities from the effects of workplace inequalities on the key outcomes analyzed.

First, we expected that (manipulated) high vs. low levels of workplace inequality would result in greater perception of workplace inequalities (*Hypothesis 1a*). Similarly, the manipulation of high (vs. low) domestic inequalities should elicit a greater perception of domestic inequality (*Hypothesis 1b*).

Drawing from the Rejection-Identification Model (Branscombe et al., 1999), which indicates that individuals respond to perceived inequality by increasing identification with their group, we anticipated stronger identification with other women (*Hypothesis 2a*), and particularly with feminists (*Hypothesis 2b*), in the conditions of higher gender inequalities, compared to the conditions where lower gender inequalities are described. In fact, our previous correlational research (see Chapter 4) consistently linked perceived gender inequalities to increased social identification with feminists, whereas a smaller or no association was observed for identification with women. Notably, in our previous research in the Italian and Turkish context, workplace gender inequalities were positively associated with social identification, while domestic inequalities exhibited either non-significant (Italy) or negative relationships (Turkey) with feminist identification, suggesting a potentially stronger impact of workplace inequality on social identification in those contexts. However, context plays a central role in shaping both gender inequality and people's response to it (Easterbrook, 2021; World Economic Forum, 2023) and therefore we make no specific predictions over which component of inequality would bring about the hypothesized outcome.

In consideration of the distinction between perceptions of inequality and the perceived legitimacy of such disparities (Dare & Jetten, 2022; Starmans et al., 2017), especially within the gender context where internalization may render inequalities as not deemed unfair (Barreto & Ellemers, 2005; Cerrato & Cifre, 2018), we did not anticipate any effects of manipulated gender inequalities on legitimacy perceptions. Furthermore, aligning with collective action research highlighting the impact of perceived inequality on collective action intentions (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; Smith et al., 2012), in general terms we predicted stronger intentions to support collective action in conditions of high (vs. low) gender inequalities (*Hypothesis 3*). Our prior findings showed that when considering the four

dimensions of perceived gender inequalities, workplace inequality was positively related to collective action (see Chapter 3), whereas perceptions of domestic inequality were not. One may anticipate a more robust effect for workplace inequality compared to domestic inequality. Last, given the nature of domestic inequality being more amenable to personal-level actions, it seems plausible that women would show greater support for personal action when domestic inequality was presented as high vs. low (*Hypothesis 4*).

Method

Design and Participants

Participants were randomly assigned to the experimental conditions of a 2 (perceptions of workplace gender inequality: low, high) × 2 (perceptions of domestic gender inequality: low, high) between-participants design. Participants were recruited through Prolific and paid at a rate of 9£ per hour. Prerequisites for participation were self-identifying as a straight woman and currently living with their partner in the UK. After eliminating the observations of 9 participants who failed the attention check, the final sample was made up of 293 women (M_{age} = 44.32 years; SD_{age} = 12.57).

Procedure and Materials

Before data collection started, all materials and measures were reviewed by the Ethical Committee of the School of Psychology of the University of Queensland. The study did not involve deceiving participants: information present in both conditions of workplace and domestic inequality was accurate, but selectively presented in either level of each condition so that the texts would give the impression that inequalities were low or high. Participants were automatically redirected from Prolific to Qualtrics, and the study was conducted online in April 2023. They were first presented with a bogus journal article about gender inequalities in the UK, which – after a short introduction explaining the aim of the article (i.e., taking stock of the situation regarding gender inequalities in the UK) – consisted

of two sections. In the first section, participants read information about workplace gender inequalities.

Following is the text read in the low workplace inequality condition:

"First, workplace inequality is at its lowest since the beginning of the 21st century. In fact, to tackle workplace discrimination, there have been several legislative and policy changes, including the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975, which prohibits discrimination based on gender in employment and education. The implementation of new work arrangements has enabled women to balance their careers with family responsibilities, and more women than ever before are now occupying high-paying and leadership positions. For instance, women now comprise about 40% of people on managerial boards, and there has been a 12.5 percentage increase in women on boards in just 10 years."

Here is the text presented in the high workplace inequality condition:

"*Despite the introduction of several legislative and policy changes (such as the Sex Discrimination Act in 1975, which prohibits discrimination based on gender in employment and education), workplace discrimination is still one of the most widespread forms of gender inequality in the UK. For example, women are less likely to be employed full-time with a rate of 45% compared to 61% of men. Furthermore, despite the increase in the number of women in high-paying and leadership positions, only 35% of board members for the largest publicly listed companies are women and only 1 in 5 boards have achieved full gender balance."*

Following, the second section of the article contained information about domestic inequality.

Here is the extract presented in the low domestic gender inequality condition:

"In addition, recent data from a YouGov survey in the UK suggests that men and women now share household responsibilities more equally than in the past. The survey found

that men are taking on more domestic tasks than ever before, with 46% of them solely responsible for taking out the bins (compared to 13% of women) and 42% solely responsible for gardening (compared to 12% of women). In addition, tasks such as food shopping appear to be better distributed between genders, with 55% of households sharing this responsibility between men and women."

Following is the text that participants read in the high domestic gender inequality condition:

"In addition, a recent YouGov survey in the UK reveals that despite progress, women and men still have unequal roles in the domestic sphere. The survey asked men and women living with a partner who does various household tasks in their relationship. Results show that women overwhelmingly report doing more than half the chores, with 54% solely responsible for cleaning the bathroom or doing the laundry (compared to 7.5% of men), and 53% solely responsible for dusting (compared to 7% of men). Although some tasks, such as cleaning the oven, are more equally distributed, only 36% of households actually share this responsibility between men and women."

Measures

After reading the article describing gender inequalities, participants were asked about their perceptions of gender inequalities, legitimacy perceptions, their social identification with women and with feminists, their collective and private action intentions, and some final demographic information. The measures of perceptions of gender inequality referred to overall perception, perception of inequality in the workplace and perception of domestic inequality. Participants were asked, "Based on your perceptions, how equal or unequal are the conditions of men and women… in general / at work / in the household?" and answers were given on a 7-point Likert scale, from 1 (*Completely unequal*) to 7 (*Completely equal*). These items were reversed-coded so that higher scores represent higher perceptions of inequality. Legitimacy

perception (adapted from Dare & Jetten, 2022) was measured by asking participants one general item "In general, how fair are the inequalities between men and women in the UK?". Answers were provided on a 7-point Likert scale, from 1 (*Completely unfair*) to 7 (*Completely fair*). Social identification with women was measured with 4 items, taken from van Breen et al. (2017), and responses were given on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). An example item is "Being a woman is an important part of how I see myself" (α = .90). To measure social identification with feminists we used the same scale (van Breen et al., 2017), by replacing the words women/woman with feminists/feminist (α=.97).

Collective action intentions were measured with 3 items, taken and adapted from Uluğ et al., (2023). Responses were given on a 7-point Likert scale, from 1 (*Not at all likely*) to 7 (*Extremely likely*) and the scale showed optimal internal consistency (α = .87). An example item is "I am willing to attend forums, and meetings, or discussion groups related to gender equality organized by the activist groups in my city or town." Intentions to enact private action tackling domestic inequalities were measured with three items, created ad hoc (α = .97). Participants were presented with the statements "I intend to tell my partner that he should do more laundry than he currently does", "I am willing to have a conversation with my partner to tell him that he should take up more cooking than he currently does" and "I am motivated to tell my partner that he should do more cleaning than he currently does" (1 = *Strongly disagree*; 7 = *Strongly agree*).

Results

A series of 2 (workplace gender inequality) × 2 (domestic gender inequality) between-groups ANOVAs were conducted on the measures of perceived gender inequality, legitimacy perceptions, social identification with women and feminists, collective action, and private action. The ANOVA on perception of workplace inequalities revealed a main effect of Workplace Gender Inequality, $F(1, 289) = 9.73$, $p = 002$, $\eta^2 = 0.033$, supporting Hypothesis

1a. Participants perceived less workplace gender inequalities in the low Workplace Inequality condition ($M = 4.25$, $SD = 1.38$) than in the high workplace inequality condition ($M = 4.74$, $SD = 1.29$). There was no main effect of domestic inequality, $F(1, 289) = 3.68$, $p = .056$. The interaction was also not significant, $F(1, 289) = 0.53$, $p = .467$. That is, reading about workplace inequalities in the UK being high or low influenced participants' specific perceptions of workplace inequalities.

The analysis on perception of domestic inequality revealed a main effect of domestic gender inequality, $F(1, 289) = 12.60$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2 = 0.834$, supporting Hypothesis 1b. Participants perceived more domestic gender inequalities in the high domestic inequality condition ($M = 5.10$, $SD = 1.36$) than in the low domestic inequality condition ($M = 4.51$, $SD = 1.51$). There was no main effect of workplace inequality, $F(1, 289) = 0.32$, $p = .574$. The interaction was also not significant, $F(1, 289) = 1.29$, $p = .258$. That is, reading about domestic inequalities in the UK being high or low successfully influenced participants' specific perceptions of domestic inequalities. The ANOVAs on the overall perception of gender inequalities, on perceived legitimacy of gender inequalities, on social identification with women and with feminists, and on collective and private actions were not significant. Therefore, we can say that Hypotheses 2, 3, and 4 were not supported. See Table 4-1 for an overview of the descriptives of the variable analyzed.

Table 4-1.

Descriptive statistics for high and low levels of workplace and domestic inequality.

Variables	Total (N = 293)	Workplace Inequality		Domestic Inequality	
		Low (n = 146)	High (n = 147)	Low (n = 146)	High (n = 147)
Overall perceived inequality	4.41 (1.28)	4.32 (1.33)	4.51 (1.23)	4.39 (1.31)	4.44 (1.26)
Perceived workplace inequality	4.50 (1.36)	4.25 (1.38)	4.74 (1.29)	4.65 (1.35)	4.35 (1.35)
Perceived domestic inequality	4.81 (1.46)	4.86 (1.39)	4.76 (1.53)	4.51 (1.51)	5.10 (1.36)
Legitimacy perception	2.90 (1.27)	2.97 (1.38)	2.84 (1.16)	2.98 (1.33)	2.83 (1.22)
Identification with women	6.15 (0.90)	6.15 (0.90)	6.16 (0.90)	6.22 (0.87)	6.08 (0.93)
Identification with feminists	4.22 (1.56)	4.22 (1.47)	4.22 (1.65)	4.18 (1.57)	4.25 (1.55)
Collective action intentions	3.38 (1.50)	3.38 (1.40)	3.38 (1.60)	3.43 (1.61)	3.33 (1.40)
Private action intentions	4.46 (1.74)	4.50 (1.67)	4.43 (1.81)	4.45 (1.78)	4.48 (1.71)

Note. Standard deviations are in parenthesis.

Path Analyses

Even though the experimental manipulations of workplace and domestic gender inequalities did not affect social identification or intentions to engage in collective and private action, it affected – as expected – the specific perceptions of inequalities. As shown in Table 4-2, both the general perception of gender inequalities and specific perceptions of workplace and domestic inequalities were significantly correlated to the other measures. Thus, we decided to explore this data cross-sectionally. First, we transformed the experimental conditions into two dichotomous variables (workplace inequality, 0 = *low inequality*, and 1 = *high inequality*; domestic inequality, 0 = *low inequality*, and 1 = *high inequality*).

Table 4-2.

Descriptives and correlations among variables in the entire sample.

Variable name	*Mean*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Perceptions of General Gender Inequalities	4.41	1.28							
2. Perceptions of Workplace Gender Inequalities	4.50	1.36	.75***						
3. Perceptions of Domestic Gender Inequalities	4.81	1.46	.57***	.41***					
4. Legitimacy Perceptions	2.90	1.27	-.57***	-.51***	-.44***				
5. Identification with Women	6.15	0.90	.11	.14*	.04	-.07			
6. Identification with Feminists	4.21	1.56	.34***	.31***	.32***	-.35***	.34***		
7. Collective Action Intentions	3.38	1.50	.24***	.17**	.31***	-.30***	.16**	.57***	
8. Private Action Intentions	4.46	1.74	.06	.01	.22***	-.15*	.14*	.22***	.25***

Note. ***p < .01, **p < .01, *p < .05

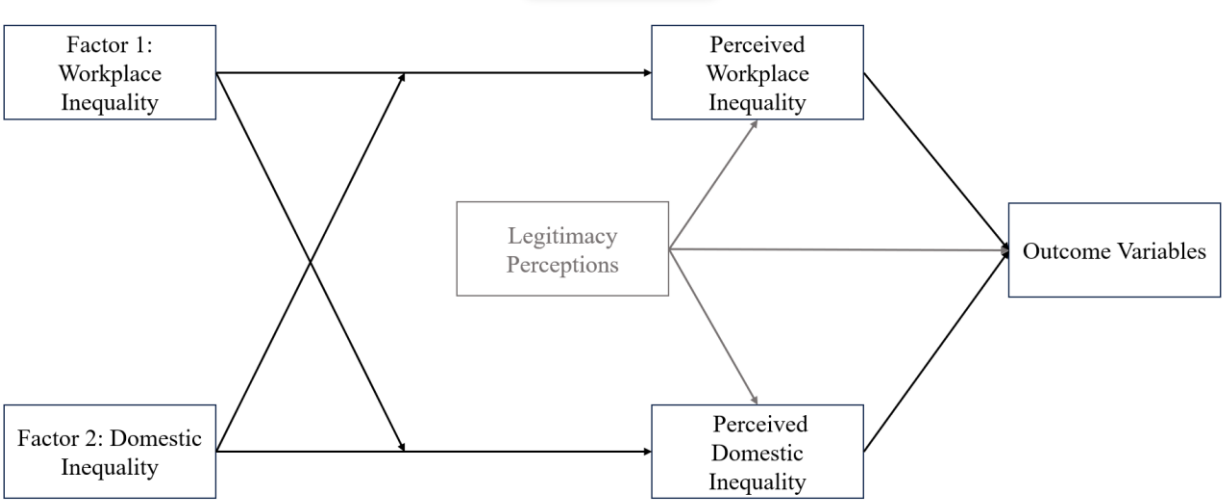
Second, as the manipulation had a significant effect on participants' specific perceptions of workplace and domestic gender inequalities, we tested if the two factors of workplace and domestic gender inequalities influenced the dependent variables (identification with women, identification with feminists, collective action, and private action) through the mediation of perceived workplace gender inequalities and perceived domestic gender inequalities. In other words, we examined whether there was any effect of the manipulated gender inequalities through a change in participants' specific assessment of workplace and gender inequalities. Informed by prior research distinguishing perceptions of inequalities from perceptions of legitimacy (Dare & Jetten, 2022), we considered the role of legitimacy perceptions too.

For the path analyses on each dependent variable, namely social identification with women, social identification with feminists, collective action intentions and private action intentions, we used Mplus 8.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2019) using the Maximum Likelihood

estimation with standard errors based on the First-order derivatives (MLF; Asparouhov & Muthen, 2012). We estimated a saturated model with observed variables; therefore, $\chi 2$, RMSEA, and SRMR values were all 0, and CFI and TLI values were 1. The two factors and their interaction were modelled as independent variables, the perceptions of workplace and domestic gender inequalities modelled as mediators and correlated with each other, and each outcome variable (social identification with women, social identification with feminists, collective action intentions, private actions intentions) was analyzed separately. Additionally, as perceived legitimacy was unaltered by the manipulations, legitimacy perceptions were modelled as a covariate of each measured variable (see Figure 4-1).

Figure 4-1.

Graphical Representation of models tested in Study 8.



Note. Legitimacy perceptions were modelled as a covariate to all observed variables.

Mediators: perceptions of workplace and domestic gender inequalities

As the first part of each path model – from the two factors to the mediators – was the same across all models analyzed, we first report results concerning the antecedents of the proposed mediators. As one could expect from the results of the univariate analyses, perceptions of workplace inequalities were positively predicted by the Workplace Inequality factor (b = 0.40, p = .045) and not by the interaction between the two factors (b = .04, p =

.886). Notably, we also found that perceptions of workplace inequalities were significantly associated with legitimacy perceptions (b = -.55, p < .001) and, surprisingly, with the Domestic Inequality factor (b = -.40, p = .037). In line with previous results, perceptions of domestic inequalities were positively predicted by the Domestic Inequality factor (b = 0.59, p = .012) and not associated with the Workplace Inequality factor (b = -.09, p = .668) nor the interaction between the two factors (b = -.14, p = .663). Additionally, perceptions of domestic inequalities were associated with legitimacy perceptions (b = -.50, p < .001). Furthermore, perceptions of workplace and domestic gender inequalities were positively correlated (r = .43, p < .001).

Besides confirming what emerged by the univariate analyses of variance (the manipulation of workplace and domestic inequalities influenced participants' perceptions of workplace inequalities and domestic inequalities, respectively) these analyses also showed something more. In particular, participants' perceptions of workplace inequalities were negatively affected by the manipulation of domestic inequality: When participants read that domestic inequalities were higher, they perceived workplace inequalities to be lower and vice versa. Additionally, we found legitimacy perceptions to be associated with both perceptions of workplace and domestic gender inequalities, so that when participants found inequalities to be more legitimate, they tended to perceive less gender inequalities in both the workplace and domestic domains.

Social identification with women

In line with what emerged in previous analyses, social identification with women was not directly predicted by manipulated Workplace Inequalities (b = .13, p = .474), Domestic Inequalities (b = .05, p = .772), or their interaction (b = -.316, p = .182). Furthermore, social identification with women was also not associated with perceptions of workplace gender inequalities (b = .09, p = .069), perceptions of domestic gender inequalities (b = -.01, p =

.920) nor with legitimacy perceptions (b = .01, p = .996). In sum, social identification with women was not predicted by any of the variables considered. Similarly, there were no significant indirect effects.

Social identification with feminists

In line with the ANOVA already conducted, social identification with feminists was not significantly affected by manipulated Workplace Inequalities (b = .14, p = .589), manipulated Domestic Inequalities (b = .21, p = .429), or their interaction (b = -.46, p = .188). Additionally, there were also no indirect effects of the manipulated factors on social identification with feminists. However, identification with feminists was positively associated with perceptions of domestic imbalance (b = .18, p = .010) and negatively associated with legitimacy perceptions (b = -.24, p = .005), so that perceiving more inequalities in the domestic domain and appraising gender inequality as less legitimate were related to stronger identification with feminists. Additionally, the link between social identification with feminists and perceptions of workplace gender inequalities did not reach statistical significance (b = .16, p = .057).

Collective action intentions

In line with the results of the univariate analyses, collective action intentions were not directly predicted by the factors of Workplace Inequalities (b = .13, p = .616), Domestic Inequalities (b = -.21, p = .424), nor by their interaction (b = -.21, p = .547). However, we found a significant and positive indirect effect of Domestic Inequalities through perceptions of domestic inequalities (b = .15, p = .021), meaning that in the high domestic inequalities condition, participants were more likely to perceive domestic inequality as high, and in turn they exhibited higher intentions to engage in collective action. Additionally, collective action intentions were significantly associated with perceptions of domestic inequality (b = .26, p <

.001) and legitimacy perception (b = -.26, p = .002). Perceptions of workplace inequalities instead, did not have any significant effect (b = -.06, p = .437).

Private action intentions

Replicating the results of the ANOVA, private action intentions were not directly predicted by the factors of Workplace Inequalities (b = .25, p = .386), Domestic Inequalities (b = -.04, p = .898), nor their interaction (b = -.40, p = .322). Nonetheless, we found a significant indirect effect of Domestic Inequality through perceptions of domestic inequalities (b = .17, p = .038), meaning that in the high domestic inequalities conditions, participants were more likely to perceive domestic inequality as high, and in turn, they exhibited higher intentions to engage in a private action. Furthermore, private action intentions were positively predicted by perceptions of domestic inequality (b = .29, p = .000) and negatively associated with perceptions of workplace inequality (b = -.22, p = .033). Legitimacy perceptions were not significantly associated with private action intentions (b = -.17, p = .090).

Discussion

By means of an experimental online study involving heterosexual women residing with their partners in the UK, we investigated the impact of perceived workplace and domestic gender inequalities on women's social identification processes, as well as their support for collective and private action promoting gender equality. Results indicated that manipulations of workplace and domestic gender inequalities influenced participants' perceptions of gender inequalities in the respective domains. Notably, the manipulations did not affect the overall perception of gender inequalities, suggesting perceptions of gender inequalities unfold on a multidimensional assessment of gender inequalities, that include more than just workplace and domestic inequality (see Chapter 2). The absence of a significant relationship between manipulation and legitimacy perceptions supported prior theoretical perspectives emphasizing the rather orthogonal relationship that can exist between

perceptions of inequality and their perceived legitimacy (Dare & Jetten, 2022). However, different from our predictions, no direct effects of manipulation on social identification, collective action intentions, or private action intentions were observed.

To unravel the relationships between manipulations and outcomes, we decided to employ a path model whereby the experimental factors were set as independent variables, perceived workplace and domestic gender inequalities as parallel mediators, and each outcome was analyzed separately. We found no indirect effects of the manipulations on social identification with women, nor with feminists, but we found interesting indirect effects on collective and private action intentions. Particularly, we expected that when women perceived more gender inequalities, they would support both collective and private action more. In this regard, we found that informing women about domestic gender inequalities as being high changed their perceptions of domestic gender inequalities accordingly, and this, in turn, was associated with stronger collective action intentions for gender equality. Additionally, perceiving gender inequality as illegitimate also motivated women to support collective action more. As for private action, we found a slightly different pattern. As with collective action intentions, exposure to information on domestic inequality influenced perceptions of gender inequalities, in turn, associated with stronger intentions for private action in favor of gender equality, and again perceiving gender inequalities as illegitimate related to stronger intentions for private action. Yet, a surprisingly negative effect of perceiving workplace inequalities emerged. While initially unrelated at a bivariate level, this association turned negative after accounting for perceived domestic inequalities. Whereas this may be a statistical artifact, it may also indicate that when perceptions of domestic gender inequality are higher, perceiving that gender inequalities are higher in the workplace too may have a negative impact, possibly due to a sense of discouragement and impaired group efficacy in

achieving the desired change. However, these speculations necessitate careful empirical examination.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The two major theoretical implications of this research concern the role of different dimensions of gender inequalities in triggering different psychological reactions. First, this study found that when we manipulated information about workplace and domestic gender inequalities, participants' perceptions of general gender inequalities were unaffected by either factor or their interaction. We did not even find a significant difference in the extent to which participants perceived "gender inequalities" between the condition with both low workplace and low domestic gender inequalities and that with high gender inequalities on both fronts. While this suggests the challenge of altering pre-existing notions of gender inequalities, particularly when they are already perceived as high, it also seems to reflect the notion that individuals' appraisal of gender inequalities unfold around multiple domains – not just workplace or domestic inequality. In previous research, we found that women's perceptions of gender inequalities affecting women included, in addition to workplace inequalities and domestic imbalance, also harassment towards women, and social expectations weighing on women's shoulders because women (see Chapter 2). In essence, the findings corroborate the conceptualization that perceptions of gender inequalities are intricate and necessitate consideration of multiple dimensions to construct a comprehensive understanding.

Secondly, this study unveils a noteworthy positive impact of perceiving gender inequalities within the domestic sphere, acting as a catalyst for both private and collective actions in support of gender equality. This finding contrasts with our prior studies (see Chapter 3), where we observed no discernible effect of perceiving domestic imbalance on women's inclination towards social change. The apparent contradiction may underscore the crucial role of social context in understanding women's reactions to gender inequalities.

Notably, when considering objective gender inequality on a global scale, the UK, ranked 15th in gender equality, stands in stark contrast to Italy (79th) and Turkey (129th) according to the Global Gender Gap Report 2023 (World Economic Forum, 2023). While objective inequality alone doesn't solely shape people's perceptions, it surely plays a significant role (Jetten & Peters, 2019). Specifically, the UK exhibits less pronounced workplace gender inequalities compared to Italy and Turkey (World Economic Forum, 2023). Yet, the scenario concerning domestic imbalance mirrors a broader global trend. The British Social Attitudes Survey (BSA) recently exposed a dissonance, with approximately 66% of women disproportionately handling cleaning and cooking duties, while over 75% advocating shared and equal household responsibilities between women and men (O'Donoghue, 2023). This discrepancy here, the awareness that change is warranted but not yet realized, may explain the pronounced effect of perceived domestic inequalities in the UK, whose impact extends beyond private action intentions to include collective action. Additionally, a meta-analytical study on workplace outcomes associated with perceived gender inequalities found stronger psychological reactions in more gender-equal countries with integrated labor policies enforcing gender equality (Triana et al., 2019), and this might also help elucidate why women in the UK respond more loudly to domestic inequalities. Thus, in a nation where domestic inequality persists as one of the last bastions of gender inequality, the readiness to garner attention and action may drive women to mobilize collectively for equality. Of course, further research comparing contexts characterized by different levels of gender inequality is needed to support such a contention. In fact, alternative explanations are also plausible. In particular, we must acknowledge that part of the manipulation of the study implied reading a bogus article about "gender inequalities in the UK" and the article itself gave information on domestic inequalities, implying that it was a dimension of gender inequalities. In other words,

the manipulation might have induced participants into considering domestic imbalance as a part of inequality, and maybe even reinforced their psychological reaction to this.

Furthermore, another relevant implication of this research pertains to the failure of replicating the rejection-identification hypothesis (Branscombe et al., 1999) experimentally, as the manipulations were not linked to an increase in social identification with women or feminists either directly or indirectly. More specifically, no effects at all were found on identification with women and, even though we found that manipulating information on domestic inequality was associated with increased perceptions of domestic inequalities and that perceiving more domestic gender inequalities was associated with stronger identification with feminists, there was no evidence of a mediation effect for identifications with feminists. On the one hand, these findings align with prior research that discerns identification with women and identification with feminists, arguing that the former has to do with the identity content associated with being a woman and the latter with women's social standing in society (van Breen et al., 2017). On the other hand, the fact that perceiving inequalities was associated with stronger feminist identification but not with our manipulation highlights that even though our manipulation succeeded in shifting women's perceptions of inequality to a certain extent, preconceived – and hence more stable – ideas about it may be stronger and more relevant to people's identification with social groups.

In terms of practical implications, this study allows us to reflect on the importance of sharing information about gender inequalities on the one hand, and the difficulty in changing people's perceptions of inequalities on the other. Particularly, we have seen that a single article on gender inequalities had a limited effect on the key outcomes. Therefore, campaigns should promote more active and interactive debates on gender inequalities, possibly fostering more stable changes in perceived inequality, and allowing for a sense of community to be created. In fact, even though perceived inequality was associated with social identification

with feminists, we saw that this effect was not driven by our manipulation. Yet, it is plausible that sharing information on gender inequalities in more communal settings (debate groups, students' groups, etc.) may foster greater change in perceived inequality and a stronger sense of identification, both factors that can facilitate women's support for gender equality.

Additionally, this study fails to provide a conclusive answer regarding which dimension of gender inequalities predominantly influences individuals' intentions to support social change, be it through collective or private actions. While our prior research in Italy and Turkey suggested a stronger association with collective action intentions in the domain of workplace inequalities, the current UK-based study suggests that perceiving domestic imbalances may be the primary driver of women's intentions to support change. These divergent findings underscore the necessity of contextual considerations in implementing campaigns for social change, recognizing that varying norms and ideologies can impact the success or backlash of interventions.

Limitations and Future Directions

A primary limitation of this research stems from the limited efficacy of the experimental manipulations in influencing the key outcomes. Even though the manipulation did alter participants' perceptions and had indirect effects on collective and private action, the lack of direct effect underlines the importance that future studies try alternative approaches to manipulate perceived gender inequality. For instance, the Bimboola paradigm (Jetten et al., 2015), which successfully manipulates perceived economic inequality by inviting participants to impersonate a hypothetical newcomer into a virtual society may be adapted to capture more aspects of gender inequalities.

Related to this point, it is important to reflect on the absence of a significant effect of the manipulation on women's social identification with other women and with feminists. On

the one hand, most studies on support for social change consider social identifications with the relevant groups as a starting point (see Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021 for a review) emphasizing how experiencing reality through the lenses of one's group membership allows group members to perceive more of the inequality that affects the group itself. This perspective claims that social identification can hence be difficult to change. In our case, this means that participants had an apriori identification with either group, which was indeed unaltered. On the other hand, social identification with relevant groups can change, for example in response to being personally discriminated against because of one's group membership (Branscombe et al., 1999), which may suggest that the effect of our manipulation was not strong enough to bring about changes in levels of identification. Future research could investigate the effect of a longer intervention, for example, a series of workshops on the pervasiveness of gender inequalities. Additionally, because social identification with women entails the identification with a group with whom women share a characteristic (i.e., their gender) while identification with feminists entails the identification with a group with whom individuals may share an ideological point of view (i.e., gender equality; van Breen et al., 2017) it may be that the effects of perceived inequality would be stronger for identification with feminists in comparison with identification with women.

Future studies should also investigate additional domains of gender inequalities (for example, that of social expectations) and research whether women's perceptions of these more subtle components of inequality differently influence collective action intentions, in contexts characterized by different levels of gender equality and democracy, as well as different gender norms endorsement to better understand what contextual factors determine women's reactions to perceived inequality across countries. Last, the measurement of private action used in this study centered on participants' intentions to equitably share household chores, necessitating specific inclusion criteria targeting straight women living with their

partners. However, future research should broaden the conceptualization of private action to ensure inclusivity and avoid the automatic exclusion of queer women.

Conclusions

Focusing on the complex interplay between workplace and domestic inequalities, this study corroborated our previous findings stressing the importance of a multidimensional conceptualization of gender inequalities and examined whether perceiving inequalities on these two different domains bring about different actions. While offering valuable insights for initiatives promoting women's advocacy for social change, our findings underscore the need to avoid uniform solutions, emphasizing the importance of customized interventions based on context and the specific target group.

Section C

Chapter 5

"Barbie is a doctor, a lawyer and so much more than that!": The Influence of Gender Inequality Perceptions on Women's Professional Aspirations [4]

[4] Ciaffoni, S., Ingellis, G. A., Condom Bosh, J. L., Rubini, M. & Moscatelli, S. (2023) "Barbie is a doctor, a lawyer and so much more than that!": The Influence of Gender Inequality Perceptions on Women's Professional Aspirations. *Manuscript in preparation.*

Abstract

In recent years, there has been a general improvement in gender equality and an unprecedented increase in awareness of this pervasive issue. Amid this societal change, this research aims to study the impact that perceiving gender inequalities may have on women university students' aspirations for their future jobs and try to account for the underlying psychological processes. Informed by the theory of relative deprivation and the stereotype threat framework, we posit that it is plausible that higher perceptions of gender inequalities may increase or decrease, respectively, women's professional aspirations. Furthermore, we also examined whether contingencies of self-worth of academic achievement and competition mediated this relationship). Study 9, conducted in Italy (N = 418), showed that perceiving gender inequalities had both direct and indirect mostly positive effects on women's career aspirations, in line with the relative deprivation hypotheses. Study 10, conducted in Spain (N = 401), largely replicated these findings and showed that the hypothesized model also helps to explain the perceived effort that students invest in their studies. The key results suggest that perceiving systematic disadvantages for women motivates women students to invest more in their academic and professional pursuits, and this may be explained as an act of social change.

Keywords: gender equality, professional aspirations, relative deprivation, contingencies of self-worth, university students

Introduction

Since its blockbuster debut in July 2023, the movie Barbie has shattered box office records (Dockterman, 2023), and this success is particularly remarkable for such a show. The movie is predominantly set in *Barbieland* – a woman-centric utopia where, in a stark juxtaposition to the contrasting "real world," women occupy positions of power and men play a very marginal societal role, and, during its course, the movie does not spare explicit references to our patriarchal societies where women still face significant inequalities in many domains in comparison to men. There are different opinions on whether the movie Barbie truly represents a feminist movie or just another disguised win of the patriarchy (Cox, 2023), but it is indisputable that the film has sparked a discourse on gender inequalities and sexism, ushering in discussions on a scale probably never witnessed before.

The cinematic success highlighted mirrors a broader societal shift towards acknowledging gender as a significant determinant of individuals' lives. Most policy frameworks have been paying more and more attention to gender equality, so gender equality targets are quite frequent in development plans (e.g., UN 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, WHO 2018), and this growing commitment is reflected elsewhere, too. For instance, in the academic niche, scientific articles mentioning gender in their title, abstract, or keywords have more than doubled in the last decade (Santoniccolo et al., 2023). However, what is particularly remarkable is the increasing investment and heightened awareness of gender issues among laypeople. As an example, a recent survey conducted across France, the United States, Germany, and Great Britain revealed that nearly all participants identified cultural and historical influences, along with men's resistance to change the status quo, as the primary drivers of persisting gender inequalities (Focus 2030, 2023). Moreover, when asked about various gender issues, such as sexual harassment and female genital mutilation, respondents reported a consistent and widespread awareness (except for menstrual

precariousness, which emerged as a less familiar concern). While acknowledging the persisting gender inequalities affecting women in various domains (e.g., Allen, 2016; Herrero et al., 2017; Ryan et al., 2016), this evidence also seems to indicate an unprecedented level of general awareness of gender inequalities.

Based on these premises, our research analyzed whether and how this heightened awareness of gender inequalities is related to women's career aspirations. Specifically, we explored the relationship between perceived gender inequalities and women's professional aspirations. Besides, acknowledging the power of contingencies of self-worth – that are personal beliefs about what one must do or be to derive a positive sense of self – in predicting motivations and behaviors (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001), we also explored whether the contingencies of self-worth of academic achievement and competition mediated the proposed relationship. To address this aim, we run two correlational studies among women enrolled in universities in two different European countries, namely Italy (Study 9) and Spain (Study 10).

Examining Responses to Inequality: Relative Deprivation and Stereotype Threat Frameworks

Two useful frameworks that can inform the understanding of how perceiving inequality may be related to people's reactions are the theory of relative deprivation (Runciman, 1966; Smith et al., 2012) and the stereotype threat model (Appel & Weber, 2021; Steele & Aronson, 1995). The former posits that group members get to experience group-based relative deprivation when a) they perceive a collective disadvantage on a certain dimension compared to a target group, b) perceive this discrepancy to be illegitimate and c) experience emotions of anger and resentment towards the perceived inequality (Leviston et al., 2020). Interestingly, when these conditions are met, the dissatisfaction with the current status of the ingroup serves as a boost to social change, and relative deprivation is a main

precursor of collective action intentions (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; van Zomeren et al., 2008).

Although studies on people's reactions to relative deprivation have mostly investigated collective action intentions (see Smith et al., 2012 for a review), different responses to feelings of relative deprivation are plausible. For example, interestingly for this research, people can engage in self-improvement behaviors that tackle the unequal situation by increasing their future potential outcomes (Ellemers, 2002). While no study has investigated this in the case of group-based relative deprivation, some evidence has shown that when employees felt personally deprived (i.e., felt to be personally treated unfairly in comparison to other individuals or groups) they were more likely to participate in developmental activities, such as workshops and training, to refine their professional role and improve their conditions in the future (Zoogah, 2010).

Opposingly, the stereotype threat framework describes the psychosocial phenomenon by which members of a group have to engage in tasks within domains where prevalent negative stereotypes about their group are evident (Steele & Aronson, 1995). According to this line of research, the awareness of such negative information about how their group performs in a certain domain negatively influences the performance of its members in that very same domain (Picho-Kiroga et al., 2021). This happens because the stereotype threat triggers a cognitive imbalance by activating conflicting self- and ingroup-concepts related to the abilities in a stereotyped domain, and results in reduced working memory, enhanced task-related worries, and degraded performance (Schmader et al., 2008). The detrimental impact of stereotype threat extends to various disadvantaged groups (see Spencer et al., 2016 for a review) and it is evident in scenarios such as non-Asian minorities academically underperforming when primed with stereotypes about high achievement among Asian minorities (Armenta, 2010), the elderly facing memory test challenges influenced by

stereotypes about their memory abilities (Armstrong et al., 2017), and women experiencing math test underperformance when primed with gender-related stereotypes suggesting lesser proficiency in math (Picho & Schmader, 2018).

Importantly, stereotype threat does much more than impact a single performance. Experiencing stereotype threat led to diminished interest and lower aspirations in stereotyped domains, as evidenced by decreased task engagement, negative experiences, and reduced self-confidence, ultimately influencing individuals' longer-term goals too (Adams et al., 2006; Muzzatti & Agnoli, 2007; Spencer et al., 2016). For instance, women experiencing stereotype threat reported diminished self-confidence in their math's abilities and decreased enjoyment and hence reported less interest in the fields of math's and science and weaker leadership aspirations compared to their male or non-threatened peers (Davies et al., 2002, 2005).

The Present Research

This research aims to examine if perceiving gender inequalities is related to women's professional aspirations for their future jobs, and accounts for the possible underlying psychological process, by investigating contingencies of self-worth (Crocker, Luhtanen, et al., 2003). Contingencies of self-worth are personal beliefs about what a person must do or must be to consider themselves valuable and worthy, and a person's self-esteem depends on whether they fail or succeed in these domains. Hence contingencies of self-worth can have a serious influence on people's motivation, affect and behavior (Crocker et al., 2002; Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Overstreet & Quinn, 2012). Previous research on university students identified at least seven possible contingencies of self-worth, but in this research we focused only on academic competence (i.e., deriving self-esteem from the evaluations of one's academic results and skills) and competition (i.e., deriving self-esteem from being superior to others), which are referred to as "achievement-related contingencies of self-worth" and

appear more appropriate to our aims (Crocker, Luhtanen, et al., 2003; Pachankis & Hatzenbuehler, 2013).

Based on the revised literature, different predictions can be advanced. On the one hand, based on the relative deprivation tradition (Smith et al., 2012), it is plausible to hypothesize that perceiving gender inequalities affecting women will be associated with stronger professional aspirations, as a way to challenge and eventually change the status quo. On the other hand, based on the stereotype threat tradition (Spencer et al., 2016), one can also hypothesize that the awareness of gender inequalities affecting women, and hence of negative and devaluing information about one's group, may be related to women's diminished interest in the corresponding domains, and hence weaker professional aspirations. Additionally, in this research, we also investigated whether contingencies of self-worth act as a motivational underpinning of this psychological process, and if they mediate the relationship between perceptions of gender inequalities and professional aspirations.

Study 9

As per the Gender Equality Index 2022, Italy – where Study 9 was conducted – ranks as the 14th most gender-equal country in the European Union, showing overall progress in various indicators of gender equality, particularly in women's empowerment (EIGE, 2022). However, despite advancements, Italy faces challenges, particularly in workplace gender inequalities, where it is ranked as the least gender-equal country in Europe.

Examining Italy through Hofstede's (1984) cultural dimensions reveals a score of 70 in the motivation towards achievement and success, categorizing it as a "decisive society" that highly values success and emphasizes competition from early childhood (Hofstede, 1984; Minkov & Kaasa, 2022; The Culture Factor Group, 2023). This cultural orientation likely contributes to strong competition among colleagues in the workplace, given that professional

success aligns closely with the societal emphasis on achievement. In order to shed light on the possible repercussions of perceiving gender inequalities on women students' career outcomes, in this study we tested the associations between perceptions of gender inequalities, the contingencies of self-worth of academic achievement and competition and women's professional aspirations.

Method

Participants were all students enrolled in the University of Bologna, one of the largest universities in the North of Italy and initially recruited through advertising on university campuses offline and online. In the second phase, some professors teaching in programs that were underrepresented within our sample were contacted and asked to advertise the study during their lessons. All data were collected between autumn and winter 2022. Participation was completely voluntary. After providing informed consent, participants had to fill in a 15-minute online anonymous questionnaire.

The final sample consisted of 418 university students (from 18 to 57 years old; M_{age} = 22.93, SD = 4.34). Two hundred and twenty-six were currently enrolled in a Bachelor's program (54.07%), 90 in a Master's program (21.53%) 75 in a combined program merging bachelor's and master's degree (17.94%), 3 were doing a PhD (0.72%) and 24 were enrolled in another program (5.74%). Their distribution according to their field of study and other demographic information is summarized in Table 5-1.

After giving informed consent, participants were presented with measures of perceptions of gender inequalities, contingencies of self-worth, career aspirations, and some demographic information. All measures were back-translated into Italian and measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 7 = strongly agree). Perceptions of gender inequalities were measured with the 16 items of the Multidimensional Gender Inequalities

Perception Inventory – Women's form (MGIPI-W; see Chapter 2). An example item is "When looking for a job, women are less likely to be hired than men.". All the subscales exhibited good reliability levels (Domestic Imbalance, with α = .75, Harassment towards Women, with α = .70, Work Inequalities, with α = .80, and Social Expectations, with α = .74).

The two contingencies of self-worth we examined, namely Academic Competence and Competition, were measured with the corresponding 5-item subscales of the Contingencies of Self-worth Scale (Crocker, Luhtanen, et al., 2003). An example item for the former is "Doing well in my studies gives me a sense of self-respect" (α = .81) and one for the latter is "Knowing that I am better than others on a certain task increases my self-esteem" (α = .91). Career aspirations were measured through the Career Aspiration Scale (Gray & O'Brien, 2007), which included two subscales, namely Leadership and Achievement Aspirations (α = .79; example item: "I hope to become a leader in my field", 6 items), and Educational Aspirations (α = .82; "I want to receive specialized training in my professional area", 2 items).

Table 5-1.

Demographic characteristics of Study 9 participants.

Demographic characteristics	*N* = 418	
	n	**%**
Gender		
Women	412	98.56
Non-binary	6	1.44
Nationality		
Italian	389	93.06
Albanian	4	0.96
Indian	1	0.24
Bulgarian	1	0.24
Tunisian	1	0.24
Romanian	1	0.24
Swiss	1	0.24
No answer provided	20	4.78
Sexual orientation		
Heterosexual	318	76.08
Bisexual	41	9.81
Gay	7	1.67
Pansexual	16	3.83
Asexual	2	0.48
Other	10	2.39
Preferred not to say	8	1.91
No answer provided	16	3.83
Area of Study		
Economy and management	12	2.87
Pharmacy and biotechnology	24	5.74
Law	2	0.48
Engineering and Architecture	70	16.75
Foreign language	12	2.87
Medicine and Surgery	52	12.44
Veterinary medicine	1	0.24
Psychology	72	17.22
Science (chemistry, biology, physics…)	19	4.55
Agro-food science	4	0.96
Educational Science	10	2.39
Motor science	2	0.48
Political science	10	2.39
Sociology	39	9.33
Humanistic area (Anthropology, cultural heritage…)	71	16.99
No answer provided	18	4.31

Results

All descriptive statistics and correlations among measures are presented in Table 5-2Table.

Table 5-2.

Descriptive statistics and correlations among variables included in Study 9.

Variable	*Mean*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Domestic Imbalance	5.77	1.02							
2. Harassment toward Women	6.45	0.63	.39***						
3. Workplace Inequalities	5.90	0.89	.36***	.60***					
4. Social Expectations	5.33	1.06	.36***	.58***	.56***				
5. CSW -Academic Competence	5.61	0.98	.10*	.16**	.17***	.04			
6. CSW - Competition	4.71	1.38	.15**	.08	.07	.01	.47***		
7. Professional Aspirations	5.35	1.00	.07	.07**	.07	.19***	.20***	.29***	
8. Educational Aspirations	6.07	0.89	.04	.17***	.13**	.06	.21***	.08	.26***

Note. ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$

For the path analysis, we used Mplus 8.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2019) using the Maximum Likelihood (ML) estimator (Satorra & Bentler, 2001), and estimated a saturated model with observed variables; therefore, $\chi 2$, RMSEA, and SRMR values were all 0, and CFI and TLI values were 1. The four components of perceptions of gender inequalities were included as predictors and correlated with each other (in line with the previous chapters). The two achievement-related contingencies of self-worth of competition and academic competence were entered as the mediators. Finally, the two dependent variables, namely leadership and achievement aspirations and educational aspirations were correlated with each other.

The complete results of the path analysis are reported in Table 5-3Table . Perceptions of workplace inequalities and harassment towards women were positively related to the contingency of academic competence, whereas there was a negative association between perceptions of social expectations and academic competence. In other words, when perceiving greater workplace gender inequalities, harassment towards women and less gendered social expectations affecting women, doing well academically was more important for participants. As for the contingency of competition instead, only perceptions of domestic imbalance were significantly related to the outcome: the more participants perceived domestic imbalance the more competing was a central part of their sense of self-worth.

Table 5-3.

Direct and indirect associations between the observed variables in the model.

Component/Contingency	Estimate	*SE*	*p*	95% CI	
				LL	*UL*
Leadership and Achievement Aspirations [a]					
CSW – Competition [b]	0.18	0.04	0.000	0.11	0.26
CSW – Academic Competence [b]	0.10	0.05	0.067	-0.01	0.20
Workplace Inequalities [c]	-0.07	0.07	0.299	-0.21	0.06
Domestic Imbalance [c]	-0.03	0.05	0.590	-0.13	0.07
Harassment towards Women [c]	-0.10	0.10	0.298	-0.30	0.09
Social Expectations [c]	0.25	0.06	0.000	0.14	0.36
Educational Aspirations [a]					
CSW – Competition [b]	-0.02	0.04	0.670	-0.08	0.05

CSW – Academic Competence [b]	0.18	0.05	0.000	0.08	0.27
Workplace Inequalities [c]	0.04	0.06	0.488	-0.08	0.17
Domestic Imbalance [c]	-0.03	0.05	0.528	-0.12	0.06
Harassment towards Women [c]	0.23	0.09	0.012	0.05	0.41
Social Expectations [c]	-0.05	0.05	0.395	-0.15	0.06
CSW – Competition [b]					
Workplace Inequalities [a]	0.05	0.10	0.586	-0.14	0.25
Domestic Imbalance [a]	0.20	0.07	0.007	0.05	0.34
Harassment towards Women [a]	0.15	0.14	0.309	-0.14	0.43
Social Expectations [a]	-0.13	0.08	0.102	-0.30	0.03
CSW – Academic Competence [b]					
Work Inequalities [a]	0.17	0.07	0.016	0.03	0.31
Domestic Imbalance [a]	0.04	0.05	0.428	-0.06	0.41
Harassment towards Women [a]	0.21	0.10	0.041	0.01	0.41
Social Expectations [a]	-0.13	0.06	0.030	-0.24	-0.01
Indirect Effects					
Work Inequalities > CSW Competition > Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	0.01	0.02	0.588	-0.03	0.05
Work Inequalities > CSW Academic Competence > Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	0.02	0.01	0.145	-0.01	0.04
Domestic Imbalance > CSW Competition > Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	0.04	0.02	0.018	0.01	0.07

Domestic Imbalance > CSW Academic Competence > Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	0.00	0.01	0.467	-0.01	0.02
Harassment towards Women > CSW Competition > Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	0.03	0.03	0.319	-0.03	0.08
Harassment towards Women > CSW Academic Competence > Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	0.02	0.02	0.173	-0.01	0.05
Social Expectations > CSW Competition > Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	-0.03	0.02	0.121	-0.06	0.01
Social Expectations > CSW Academic Competence > Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	-0.01	0.01	0.162	-0.03	0.01
Work Inequalities > CSW Competition > Educational Aspirations	-0.00	0.00	0.737	-0.01	0.00
Work Inequalities > CSW Academic Competence > Educational Aspirations	0.03	0.02	0.047	0.00	0.06
Domestic Imbalance > CSW Competition > Educational Aspirations	-0.00	0.01	0.674	-0.02	0.01
Domestic Imbalance > CSW Academic Competence > Educational Aspirations	0.01	0.01	0.439	-0.01	0.03
Harassment towards Women > CSW Competition > Educational Aspirations	-0.00	0.01	0.694	-0.01	0.01
Harassment towards Women > CSW Academic Competence > Educational Aspirations	0.04	0.02	0.077	0.00	0.08
Social Expectations > CSW Competition > Educational Aspirations	0.00	0.01	0.680	-0.01	0.01
Social Expectations > CSW Academic Competence > Educational Aspirations	-0.02	0.01	0.064	-0.05	0.00

Note. [a] = Component of professional aspirations; [b] = Achievement-related contingencies of self-worth; [c] = Component of perceptions of gender inequality; 95% *CI* = 95% confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit; *p* = statistical significance value. Bolded variables highlight statistically significant predictors.

The model explained 13.00% of the total variance of leadership and achievement aspirations. Of the four components of perceptions of gender inequalities, only the social expectations component had a significant and positive direct association with the outcome.

The contingency of competition was also positively associated with leadership and achievement aspirations. Additionally, the indirect effect of domestic imbalance on leadership and achievement aspirations through the contingency of competition was significant and positive, although small. This suggests that the more women perceived domestic imbalance, the greater the centrality of competition to their self-worth and, in turn, higher their leadership and achievement aspirations.

The model accounted for 6.80% of the overall variance of educational aspirations. Only the perception of gender inequalities related to harassment towards women showed a significant and positive association with the outcome. Similarly, the contingency of academic competence displayed a positive association with educational aspirations. Concerning indirect associations, the indirect effect of workplace inequality on educational aspirations via the contingency of academic competence yielded a significant p-value, suggesting that greater perceptions of workplace inequality were associated with higher relevance of the contingency of academic competence, and this, in turn, boosted educational aspirations. However, when looking at confidence intervals, the lower bound indicates zero, evidencing a non-significant relationship. Therefore, these results should be considered with caution.

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine whether and how women's perceptions of gender inequalities were associated with their professional aspirations, taking into account the role of contingencies of self-worth, which may represent one of the psychological processes involved in such a process. These results provided evidence of the relationship between perceiving gender inequalities and women's professional aspirations. Overall, the more women university students perceived gender inequalities, the higher their leadership, achievement, and educational aspirations. At least partially, this effect was explained by a shift in women's contingencies of self-worth: being more perceptive of gender inequalities

may lead women to attribute more importance to the domains of academic competence and competition (the so-called “achievement-related contingencies” of self-worth).

However, these initial findings, while suggesting an association between perceived gender inequalities and professional expectations, focused solely on future intentions within a predominantly young and professionally inexperienced university student sample. Hence, the subsequent study not only aimed to replicate these results in a distinct national context, specifically Spain but also extended the examination of such relationships to the realm of perceived academic effort.

Study 10

Conducted in Spain, Study 10 aims to replicate previous findings and assess the relationship between perceptions of gender inequalities and academic effort in a country positioned as the 6th most gender-equal nation in the European Union, according to the Gender Equality Index 2022. Whereas the country showcases progress across various gender equality indicators, particularly in empowerment (EIGE, 2022), Spain grapples with a pronounced gender inequality aspect related to time allocation, specifically in care and domestic work, as well as social activities, between women and men.

In terms of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, Spain records a score of 42 out of 100 in motivation towards achievement and success, denoting it as a "consensus-oriented society" that prioritizes quality of life and emphasizes harmony from early childhood (Hofstede, 1984; Minkov & Kaasa, 2022; The Culture Factor Group, 2023). This cultural inclination likely shapes a perspective where strong competition is viewed as undesirable. To test the replicability of our findings, in this study we tested the associations between perceived gender inequalities, achievement-related contingencies of self-worth, and women’s

professional aspirations in Spain. Furthermore, we also tested whether our model was also effective in assessing students' perceived academic effort.

Method

All data were collected from spring to summer 2023. The final sample was made up of 401 university students (from 18 to 32 years old; M_{age} = 22.47, SD = 3.39). Of these, 258 were currently enrolled in a bachelor's program (64.34%), 84 in a Master's program (20.95%), 17 were doing a PhD (4.24%), 27 were enrolled in another program (6.73%) and 15 (3.74%) did not provide this information. Their distribution according to their field of study is summarized – together with other demographic information – in Table 5-4.

After providing their informed consent, participants were presented with the same measures as the previous study, namely perceptions of gender inequalities in the realm of domestic imbalance (α = .84), harassment towards women (α = .89), workplace inequalities (α = .83) and social expectations (α = .79), the contingency of academic competence (α = .74) and competition (α = .82), leadership and achievement aspirations (α = .70) and educational aspirations (α = .79). Additionally, they were asked about their perceived academic effort with the single item "How much effort do you put into your studies?" (1 = Not at all; 7 = A great deal) and some final demographic information.

Table 5-4.

Demographic characteristics of Study 10 participants.

Demographic characteristics	***N* = 401**	
	n	**%**
Gender		
Women	399	99.50
Non-binary	2	0.50
Nationality		
Spanish	337	84.04
Italian	10	2.49
German	2	0.50
USA	2	0.50
Argentinian	1	0.25
Colombian	2	0.50
Venezuelan	4	1.00
Peruvian	2	0.50
Bolivian	1	0.25
Canadian	1	0.25
Chilean	1	0.25
French	2	0.50
Honduras	1	0.25
Indian	1	0.25
Mexican	3	0.75
Russian	1	0.25
Portuguese	1	0.25
Romanian	2	0.50
Armenian	1	0.25
Chinese	1	0.25
Dutch	2	0.50
Ecuadorian	4	1.00
No answer provided	19	4.72
Sexual orientation		
Heterosexual	267	66.58
Bisexual	91	22.69
Gay	18	4.49
Pansexual	1	0.25
Asexual	2	0.50
Other	3	0.75
Preferred not to say	8	2.00
No answer provided	11	2.74
Area of Study		
Economy and management	17	4.24
Pharmacy and biotechnology	8	2.00
Law	4	1.00
Engineering and architecture	13	3.24
Foreign language	20	4.99

Medicine and Surgery	14	3.49
Psychology	26	6.48
Science (chemistry, biology, physics…)	36	8.98
Agro-food science	2	0.50
Educational Science	63	15.71
Political science	4	1.00
Mathematics and statistics	3	0.75
Sociology	46	11.47
Humanistic area (anthropology, cultural heritage…)	11	2.74
Criminology	4	1.00
Human resource	57	14.21
Tourism	6	1.50
Social work	51	12.72
No answer provided	15	3.74

Results

Descriptive statistics and correlations among measures are presented in Table 5-5.

Table 5-5.

Descriptive statistics and correlations among variables in Study 10.

Variable	*Mean*	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Domestic Imbalance	5.78	1.16								
2. Harassment toward Women	6.41	0.88	.57***							
3. Workplace Inequalities	5.47	1.17	.53***	.61***						
4. Social Expectations	4.96	1.25	.51***	.55***	.58***					
5. CSW -Academic Competence	5.32	0.98	.31***	.30***	.26***	.24***				
6. CSW - Competition	4.57	1.23	.27***	.23***	.21***	.21***	.50***			
7. Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	4.90	1.09	.08	.18***	.12*	.12*	.25***	.18***		
8. Educational Aspirations	5.66	1.30	.21***	.33***	.17**	.19***	.30***	.12*	.51***	
9. Academic Effort	5.18	1.18	.15**	.22***	.16**	.13*	.30***	.12*	.27***	.30***

Note. ***$p < .001$, **$p < .01$, *$p < .05$

We modeled the same paths as Study 9, with the four components of perceptions of gender inequalities as predictors, and the two contingencies as mediators, but having one additional outcome variable, namely perceived academic effort. The analyses were run on Mplus 8.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2019) and the model was again fully saturated.

The complete results of the path analysis are reported in Table 5-6Table. Only perceptions of domestic imbalance were significantly related to the contingency of competition, so perceiving more gender inequalities in the domestic domain related to greater importance attributed to performing better than others. Similarly, greater perceptions of domestic imbalance and harassment towards women were positively associated with the contingency of academic competence.

Table 5-6.

Direct and indirect associations between the observed variables in the model (Study 10).

				95% CI	
Component/Contingency	**Estimate**	***SE***	***p***	***LL***	***UL***
Leadership and Achievement Aspirations [a]					
CSW – Competition [b]	0.06	0.05	0.246	-0.04	0.16
CSW – Academic Competence [b]	0.22	0.06	0.001	0.09	0.34
Workplace Inequalities [c]	-0.01	0.06	0.931	-0.13	0.12
Domestic Imbalance [c]	-0.09	0.06	0.120	-0.21	0.02
Harassment towards Women [c]	0.18	0.08	0.031	0.02	0.34
Social Expectations [c]	0.03	0.06	0.577	-0.08	0.14
Educational Aspirations [a]					
CSW – Competition [b]	-0.07	0.06	0.203	-0.18	0.04
CSW – Academic Competence [b]	0.34	0.07	0.000	0.20	0.48
Workplace Inequalities [c]	-0.09	0.07	0.208	-0.23	0.05

Domestic Imbalance [c]	0.01	0.07	0.976	-0.13	0.13
Harassment towards Women [c]	0.46	0.09	0.000	0.27	0.64
Social Expectations [c]	0.02	0.06	0.799	-0.11	0.14
Academic Effort					
CSW – Competition [b]	-0.07	0.06	0.207	-0.19	0.04
CSW – Academic Competence [b]	0.37	0.08	0.000	0.22	0.51
Workplace Inequalities [c]	0.05	0.07	0.497	-0.09	0.19
Domestic Imbalance [c]	-0.01	0.07	0.924	-0.14	0.12
Harassment towards Women [c]	0.18	0.10	0.068	-0.01	0.37
Social Expectations [c]	-0.02	0.06	0.786	-0.14	0.11
CSW – Competition [b]					
Workplace Inequalities [a]	0.03	0.07	0.693	-0.11	0.17
Domestic Imbalance [a]	0.18	0.07	0.005	0.06	0.31
Harassment towards Women [a]	0.12	0.09	0.206	-0.06	0.30
Social Expectations [a]	0.06	0.06	0.333	-0.06	0.18
CSW – Academic Competence [b]					
Work Inequalities [a]	0.04	0.06	0.504	-0.07	0.14
Domestic Imbalance [a]	0.15	0.05	0.004	0.05	0.25
Harassment towards Women [a]	0.16	0.07	0.023	0.02	0.31
Social Expectations [a]	0.04	0.05	0.419	-0.06	0.14
Indirect Effects					
Work Inequalities > CSW Competition > Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	0.01	0.01	0.709	-0.01	0.01
Work Inequalities > CSW Academic Competence > Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	0.01	0.01	0.512	-0.02	0.03
Domestic Imbalance > CSW Competition > Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	0.01	0.01	0.284	-0.01	0.03
Domestic Imbalance > CSW Academic Competence > Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	0.03	0.02	0.029	0.01	0.06

Harassment towards Women > CSW Competition > Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	0.01	0.01	0.392	-0.01	0.02
Harassment towards Women > CSW Academic Competence > Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	0.04	0.02	0.059	0.00	0.08
Social Expectations > CSW Competition > Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	0.01	0.01	0.457	-0.01	0.01
Social Expectations > CSW Academic Competence > Leadership and Achievement Aspirations	0.01	0.01	0.432	-0.02	0.05
Work Inequalities > CSW Competition > Educational Aspirations	-0.01	0.01	0.707	-0.01	0.01
Work Inequalities > CSW Academic Competence > Educational Aspirations	0.01	0.02	0.508	-0.02	0.05
Domestic Imbalance > CSW Competition > Educational Aspirations	-0.01	0.01	0.246	-0.04	0.01
Domestic Imbalance > CSW Academic Competence > Educational Aspirations	0.05	0.02	0.015	0.01	0.09
Harassment towards Women > CSW Competition > Educational Aspirations	-0.01	0.01	0.370	-0.03	0.01
Harassment towards Women > CSW Academic Competence > Educational Aspirations	0.06	0.03	0.041	0.00	0.11
Social Expectations > CSW Competition > Educational Aspirations	-0.01	0.01	0.441	-0.02	0.01
Social Expectations > CSW Academic Competence > Educational Aspirations	0.01	0.02	0.426	-0.02	0.05
Work Inequalities > CSW Competition > Effort	-0.01	0.01	0.707	-0.01	0.01
Work Inequalities > CSW Academic Competence > Effort	0.01	0.02	0.508	-0.03	0.05
Domestic Imbalance > CSW Competition > Effort	-0.01	0.01	0.250	-0.04	0.01
Domestic Imbalance > CSW Academic Competence > Effort	0.05	0.02	0.014	0.01	0.10
Harassment towards Women > CSW Competition > Effort	-0.01	0.01	0.372	-0.03	0.01
Harassment towards Women > CSW Academic Competence > Effort	0.06	0.03	0.040	0.01	0.12
Social Expectations > CSW Competition > Effort	-0.01	0.01	0.442	-0.02	0.01
Social Expectations > CSW Academic Competence > Effort	0.01	0.02	0.425	-0.02	0.05

The model explained 8.20% of the total variance of leadership and achievement aspirations, and the only significant predictors in the model were perceived harassment towards women and the contingency of academic competence. Additionally, a small and

positive indirect effect of domestic imbalance on leadership and achievement aspirations through the contingency of academic competence emerged.

The estimated model accounted for 16.20% of the overall variance of educational aspirations. Perception of gender inequalities related to harassment towards women and the contingency of academic competence showed a significant and positive association with the outcome. In terms of indirect associations, results uncovered a positive effect of domestic imbalance on educational aspirations through the contingency of academic competence. Furthermore, consulting p-values, there seems to be a small positive indirect effect of harassment towards women on educational aspirations through the contingency of academic competence. However, this effect is not deemed significant by looking at confidence intervals, as the lower bound is zero and therefore we cannot fully establish the presence of this indirect effect.

The model accounted for 12.00% of the overall variance of academic effort. Perception of gender inequalities related to harassment towards women and the contingency of academic competence showed a significant and positive association with the outcome. Furthermore, mediation analyses revealed a small positive indirect effect from domestic imbalance to the perceived academic effort through the contingency of academic competence and a small positive indirect effect from perceptions of harassment towards women to the academic effort through the contingency of academic competence.

Discussion

Building on the results of Study 9, the present study aimed to replicate such findings in a different sample of university students embedded in a different cultural context. In doing so, we analyzed the relationship between women's perceptions of gender inequalities, their contingencies of self-worth related to academic competence and competition, and their

professional aspirations in a sample of students enrolled in different universities in Spain. Additionally, instead of solely focusing on longer-term professional ambitions, such as those analyzed in Study 9, we examined the relationship with perceived academic effort, to test whether women's perceptions of gender inequalities were also related to a more current outcome, that is how much effort they perceived to invest in their academic career.

In line with the previous study, the results provided evidence that the more women university students perceived gender inequalities the higher their leadership, achievement, and educational aspirations. Although placing importance on doing well academically was a significant predictor of both types of professional aspirations considered, and of perceived academic effort too, we did not find any indirect effect of perceptions of gender inequalities on the outcomes through their achievement-related contingencies of self-worth.

General Discussion

Throughout two studies, we investigated whether perceiving gender inequalities acts as a drive or a hindrance to women nurturing high professional aspirations and whether this effect can be attributed to a shift in their contingencies of self-worth, that is, personal beliefs about what one must do to achieve a positive view of the self. The dual emphasis on both group-based perceptions of gender inequalities and the mediating role of contingencies of self-worth underscores the novel nature of this research, offering fresh insights and advancing the understanding of the psychological processes underlying women's professional aspirations in the face of gender inequalities. All in all, we found support for a positive relationship, so that being aware of gender inequalities was related to higher achievement, leadership, and educational aspirations. These findings are theoretically consistent with existing literature in the relative deprivation tradition (Ellemers, 2002; Smith et al., 2012; Zoogah, 2010) and provide greater insights into what are some of the more unexplored effects of perceiving gender inequalities.

Specifically, Study 9 was conducted among students enrolled in one of the largest universities in the North of Italy and enrolled in a variety of different programs and at different stages in their careers. Perceiving gendered social expectations and domestic imbalance was, in the first case directly and in the second case indirectly through the contingency of competition, associated with professional aspirations of leadership and achievement. Furthermore, perceiving more harassment towards women was associated with stronger intentions to receive further training after starting their professional careers, and so was the case for workplace inequalities through higher academic competence.

Additionally, Study 10 was conducted among university students enrolled in several universities in Spain and enrolled in a few different programs. Albeit finding that higher perceptions of gender inequalities and higher importance placed on the achievement-related contingencies of self-worth were related to stronger professional aspirations as well as perceived academic effort, a slightly different pattern emerged in this study. Achievement and leadership aspirations were associated with higher perceptions of harassment towards women, and domestic imbalance through an increase in the contingency of academic competence. Educational aspirations were instead directly associated with higher perceived harassment towards women, and indirectly with domestic imbalance and harassment towards women through the contingency of academic competence. Last, perceived academic effort was indirectly associated with perceived domestic imbalance and harassment towards women through academic competence. In other words, the effects found in the study conducted in Spain were more predominantly driven by perceived harassment towards women as compared to Italy, where all dimensions showed some significant associations with either outcome.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The key results across both studies reflect the findings of previous research, in particular that of the relative deprivation tradition (Ellemers, 2002; Smith et al., 2012). Perceiving systematic disadvantages across the several life domains considered may motivate female university students to do their part in changing the social landscape and contribute to a higher representation of women in the workplace by investing more in their academic and professional careers. Whereas most studies investigating perceptions of inequality and support for social change focused on either direct support for group actions aimed at changing the status quo (i.e., collective action; Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021) or support for affirmative action policies (i.e., pink quotas; Fleischmann & Burgmer, 2020), new lines of research invite to conceive support for social change in a broader sense, that include actions that have not been typically examined, nor conceptualized as a way to disrupt the status quo (Rosales & Langhout, 2020). Placing more importance on academic achievement and competition and nurturing higher professional aspirations may be a more silent way to change this unequal situation, even though puts even more pressure on groups that are already disadvantaged.

Differently, our findings did not align with previous studies in the stereotype threat tradition (Picho-Kiroga et al., 2021; Steele & Aronson, 1995), as higher awareness of gender inequalities was not associated with disengagement from the work or academic domain. Arguably, participants in this research may have not experienced a feeling of stereotype threat and hence this effect on longer-term aspirations may have not been tracked. The theory highlights that one of the conditions under which people are more likely to experience a stereotype threat – and hence to report aligning beliefs – is when participants are presented with a challenging and arousing task in the stereotype-related domain (ex. women doing a

difficult math's test; Spencer et al., 2016), while in this research participants simply had to report their intentions on their future career.

Furthermore, what seems particularly interesting to consider is the role that each component of perceptions of gender inequalities played in predicting higher professional aspirations. In fact, based on purely economic logic, one could think that only knowing that women face disadvantageous experiences in the workplace should influence their professional aspirations and that – instead – inequalities experienced in other domains, such as domestic imbalance, social expectations, and harassment towards women should not weigh on such relationship between perceiving inequality and nurturing professional aspirations. However, our results describe a more nuanced situation, in which more than just economic gender inequality has specific associations with the considered outcomes, thus highlighting the importance of considering the complexity of gender inequalities in gender research. These results are consistent with the integrated threat theory (Croucher, 2017; Stephan & Stephan, 2000), claiming the existence of four types of threat that play a role in intergroup dynamics: a realistic threat, including menaces to the existence or power of the group; a symbolic threat, arising when perceiving a difference in the groups' worldviews, their values, and norms; intergroup anxiety, describing the feelings of anxiety in interacting with an outgroup member from whom people can anticipate embarrassment; and negative stereotypes, including the stereotypical beliefs about an outgroup which can hinder harmony between two or more groups. While workplace inequality and harassment towards women may be assimilated as realistic threats that women may feel when thinking of men, we may argue that the domains of social expectations and domestic imbalance fall between the symbolic threat and the negative stereotypes category, and, as our findings show, it is these too that play a role in understanding women's professional aspirations.

Regarding practical implications, the key results across these two studies can guide programs that help undergraduate students seek employment, and launch specific streams for those socialized as women. In fact, in many WEIRD countries (such as those where these studies were conducted) women generally complete their academic career earlier and with higher grades than men, but when they enter the workplace they tend to have more precarious and less-paid jobs (Almalaurea, 2023; EIGE, 2023). By implementing tailored workshops that deal with gender inequalities and promote strategies to cope with structural disadvantages, future students socialized as women can be better equipped to keep their professional aspirations high and build collective resilience, in terms of networks, instruments, and coping strategies. However, this should not be considered a long-term solution, but rather just a first step of a longer intervention to obtain social change. Women are not responsible victims of gender inequalities, and we do not aim to promote the idea that by taking certain training or being enrolled in certain programs, they can be "fixed" and so will the inequality (Ryan, 2023). Gender inequalities are a structural problem, and, as such, call for structural solutions.

Limitations and Future Research

The main limitation of this research is that it does not allow us to understand if women's higher professional aspirations in response to perceived gender inequality really are a form of support for social change, or if this represents a different psychological phenomenon. When asked about their perceptions of gender inequalities affecting women, our participants are likely to have experienced a social identity threat. When members of disadvantaged groups perceive their group's characteristics as undervalued and in a disadvantaged position, as seen in gender-related challenges, their identity becomes threatened (Derks et al., 2006). Rather than passively experiencing this social identity threat, people are motivated to manage this threatened identity and different strategies can be used to

do so (Derks et al., 2016; Ellemers, 1993; Ellemers et al., 2002). One of them, as mentioned, is that people will embrace collective actions to restore the group image.

However, another strategy that people may use to restore a threatened identity, is that of "individual mobility": members of the disadvantaged group may seek to enhance personal outcomes by separating themselves from the disadvantaged group and striving for acceptance into a higher-status group (Ellemers, 2002). This is, for example, the case of the queen bee phenomenon, by which successful women in male-dominated working environments often distance themselves from other women and legitimize gender inequalities (Derks et al., 2016). To better understand whether the effects found in this research can be understood as a form of collective resistance or as a form of individual mobility enacted to distance the self from the ingroup, future research should then investigate the role of identification with women and social identity threat in this process, particularly by employing an experimental design that could allow for testing the causal relationship of perceptions of gender inequalities on these outcomes.

Similarly, being unable to gauge women's motivations behind their higher professional intentions makes it harder to claim their intentions as support for social change as the unique explanation for our findings. Women's professional careers come with more obstacles than men's (Ryan, 2023) and some research uncovered how in the selection process women, in comparison to men, are evaluated along multiple dimensions outside of the competence strictly required to perform the job right (Moscatelli et al., 2020; Prati et al., 2019). Therefore, it may be that women with more awareness of gender inequalities may anticipate that in order to become attractive candidates in the eyes of a future employer they will have to prove more qualities and stronger aspirations. Future research therefore should more directly assess women's motivations behind their professional aspirations.

Furthermore, even if the process observed here was as encouraging as a form of collective resistance, it's fundamental to acknowledge that most participants in our sample were young university students and might have not had any first-hand experience of the workplace. Whereas contingencies of self-worth motivate people to behave in a certain way that ultimately maximizes their chances of succeeding in any given domain (e.g., someone for whom academic competence is a strong contingency of self-worth will be more motivated to study and do well in university Crocker et al., 2003), the outcome is not a given and, aside from their effort and aspirations, women will be likely to personally experience the very gender discrimination that they are aware of. If that happens, specifically because of the higher importance that women have put on the contingencies of competitions and academic competence, perceiving a failure around these domains will have even more dramatic effects on their well-being and life satisfaction. Previous studies have shown indeed that strong contingencies of self-worth, especially when based on standards that are unlikely to be attained, can have particularly negative consequences on personal and social wellbeing (Crocker et al., 2003; Herrmann et al., 2019). Longitudinal evidence is warranted in examining the impact that entering the workplace has on young women after university.

Additionally, this research has explored the effects of perceived gender inequalities on professional aspirations through the achievement-related contingencies of self-worth in two different social contexts, namely Italy and Spain. Despite the largely replicated findings, one may question whether the absence of significant relationships with the contingency of competition in Study 10 represents a cultural product of a "consensus-oriented" society, which stirs away from competition and values harmony more (Minkov & Kaasa, 2022). Future studies could look deeper into the role of culture, for example by measuring motivations towards achievement and success and testing country-level moderators of our model.

Conclusion

Taken together, these findings highlight the potential of perceiving gender inequalities to motivate university students to nurture higher professional aspirations and invest greater effort in their academic pursuits. The consistent associations uncovered between different aspects of gender inequalities and higher professional aspirations further highlight that it's not solely the awareness of women facing tougher work prospects but also an acknowledgement of gendered social expectations, harassment, and domestic imbalances that collectively propel women to strive for more than what women are currently reserved. Possibly, these higher professional aspirations represent a deeper call for social change that does not stop at having, for example, gender parity in leadership but a broader emancipation of women, allowing them the freedom to exert their agency across all domains.

By highlighting the role that perceiving multiple aspects of gender inequalities has on women's professional aspirations, this research makes a novel contribution that stresses the importance of creating awareness around gender inequalities. In this context, accessible knowledge, like that spread by an influential movie like Barbie which prompts reflection on gender-related opportunities, becomes crucial for interventions striving to promote gender equality. Ultimately, ensuring that "Barbie should be a doctor, a lawyer, and more" becomes a moral imperative that warrants prompt realization and action, not just from governments, policymakers, educators, and social scientists, but rather from society at large.

Section D

Chapter 6

Turning Ingroup Wounds into Bonds: Perceptions of Gender Inequalities Predict Attitudes Towards Other Minorities [5]

[5] Ciaffoni, S., Rubini, M., & Moscatelli, S. (2023). Turning ingroup wounds into bonds: Perceptions of gender inequalities predict attitudes toward other minorities. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14. https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1327262 *(IF=4,232; Q1).*

Abstract

Despite significant strides in reducing gender disparities over the past decades, women still face disparities in several domains. While extensive research has explored the various consequences of gender inequalities for women, this study (N = 493 participants) delves into a less-explored dimension, investigating whether and how perceiving gender inequalities is associated with attitudes towards minorities. Drawing on relative deprivation theory and intra-minority solidarity research, we examined the relationship between women's perceptions of gender inequalities – spanning workplace inequality, domestic inequality, sexual harassment, and social expectations – and attitudes toward gays and lesbians, transgender women, and immigrants. We also explored whether indignation, arising from recognizing unjust circumstances, mediated these relationships, and the moderating role of perceived friends' support for gender equality. The results of the path analyses unveiled a nuanced relationship. While women who were more aware of gender inequalities exhibited more positive attitudes toward gays and lesbians and transgender women, no such relationship was observed regarding immigrants. Indignation and perceived friends' support for gender equality were key factors in fostering positive intergroup attitudes. Regarding their moderating role, perceived social norms only influenced the relationship between indignation and attitudes towards gays and lesbians. These findings shed light on the intricate interplay between gender inequalities and minority group attitudes. Recognizing the multifaceted nature of gender inequality and its emotional impact can catalyze promoting coalitional attitudes and collective action among disadvantaged groups. The study also underscores the potential of close groups' norms in promoting positive intergroup attitudes, warranting further exploration.

Keywords: gender inequality, minority groups, attitudes, intra-minority solidarity, relative deprivation

Introduction

Even though in the last 50 years, disparities between men and women have decreased in Western societies, inequality and discrimination based on gender are still a common phenomenon (Riquelme et al., 2021; World Economic Forum, 2020). Women globally earn 20% less than men at work while carrying out at least 2.5 times more unpaid work (ILO, 2022). They also continue to be victims of discrimination in other domains: for instance, the European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights (2015) estimated that about 55% of European women were targets of unwanted sexual harassment at least once in their lifetime.

Research has pointed out how gender inequalities in the work and domestic domains restrict women's access to education, jobs, and career opportunities, and has highlighted the pervasive consequences of sexual harassment and everyday instances of gender discrimination (e.g., sexist remarks; sexual objectification) on women's well-being (Hackett et al., 2019; Vigod & Rochon, 2020). To our knowledge, less attention has been paid to more distal correlates of gender inequalities, such as intergroup attitudes and prejudice. Analyzing women's role within intergroup relations is vital for both advancing understanding and facilitating social justice. Constituting over half of the global population (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, 2022), women wield significant numerical influence that can shape social dynamics. Because of this vital importance, this study aimed to assess whether and how the perception of being the target of gender inequalities relates to women's attitudes towards other disadvantaged groups.

Based on the existing literature, two opposite patterns of relationships can be plausible. On the one hand, relative deprivation theorization would lead to expect that the perception of gender inequalities is related to greater prejudice towards minority groups (Runciman, 1966; Smith & Pettigrew, 2014). On the other hand, research on intra-minority

solidarity has shown that under certain conditions, minority membership might also foster positive attitudes toward outgroups (Craig & Richeson, 2012, 2016).

The present study aimed to address this issue by examining whether and how perceiving gender inequality was related to women's attitudes toward minority groups. Acknowledging that gender inequality has a multifaced nature, we considered women's subjective perception of their disadvantaged stand along different domains and their emotional reactions to such perceptions. Given the power of social norms – that is, shared beliefs and prescriptions concerning the appropriate conduct for group members (Ajzen, 1991; Jetten et al., 1996) – as drivers of intergroup attitudes (Crandall et al., 2002), we also explored whether perceived social norms of one's group of friends, related to gender equality, worked as a moderator of the relationships under investigation. To address these aims, we focused on women's attitudes toward three minorities that in Italy, where the study was conducted, are often targets of stigmatization, such as gays and lesbians, transgender women, and immigrants (Federico, 2023; Ferrari, 2018; Valbruzzi, 2018).

Relative Deprivation as a Driver of Prejudice against Minorities

Perceiving that one's group is subjected to unfair treatment is a powerful psychological phenomenon. If the comparison between the conditions of the ingroup and the outgroup leads individuals to perceive that their group is not granted what it deserves, individuals are likely to experience group relative deprivation (for reviews, see Anier et al., 2016; Smith & Pettigrew, 2014). Such experience is in principle independent from one's factual situation and the objective prestige or wealth of the group itself; in fact, even members of objectively advantaged groups can feel that they are being treated worse than deserved compared to a disadvantaged outgroup (Crosby, 1976; Vanneman & Pettigrew, 1972).

Group relative deprivation has been related to a greater willingness to act for social change (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; Smith et al., 2012; see also Mazzuca et al., 2022;) but also to more negative attitudes toward outgroups (Anier et al., 2016; Moscatelli et al., 2014). Pettigrew et al., (2008), analyzing data from different European countries, showed that the more individuals reported feelings of being relatively deprived as citizens of their countries, the more they exhibited prejudice against immigrants. A similar pattern was found in the South African context (Dambrun et al., 2006). What is interesting, is that when people experience group-based relative deprivation they do not only report more negative attitudes towards groups that are better off, threatening or somehow responsible for their group's situation (Meuleman et al., 2020; Moscatelli et al., 2014) but tend to show prejudice towards other stigmatized groups as well (Eller et al., 2020; Guimond & Dambrun, 2002; see also Jetten et al., 2015).

The main reason why perceiving that the ingroup is unfairly disadvantaged has such an impact is that it fosters the experience of the so-called justice-related emotions, such as anger, resentment, or indignation, especially if one thinks that the situation is changeable (Smith et al., 2012; van Zomeren et al., 2004). Such justice-related emotions are key in understanding the consequences of cognitive appraisals of one's group situation and were found to mediate the association of relative deprivation with collective action intentions and intergroup attitudes (Smith et al., 2012). In particular, anger and resentment are strongly associated with readiness to act (Leach et al., 2002), whereas feelings of indignation are especially likely to arise in response to perceived injustice and violation of moral values (Lazarus, 1991; Leach et al., 2007).

Whereas relative deprivation theory has emphasized the role of justice-related appraisal and emotions, it should be noted that other psychological processes can also account for minority groups' discrimination against other minorities. System justification

theory claims that people have epistemic, existential, and relational needs to justify the status quo, and one of the ways in which this occurs is by discriminating against the disadvantaged, for example by thinking that ultimately they deserve to be at the bottom of society (Jost, 2019). Moreover, people who are discriminated against, such as established immigrant communities, can discriminate against other minority groups (e.g., new immigrants) when they see such groups as a threat in the labor market (Meeusen et al., 2019) or a threat to the value of their social identity (Branscombe et al., 1999). In the latter case, according to social identity theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), discrimination against lower-status outgroups can represent a defensive response through which members of a disadvantaged group try to re-establish their collective self-esteem (e.g., Kessler & Mummendey, 2001).

Relationships between Minority Groups: Competition or Solidarity?

Albeit frequent, outgroup derogation is not the only response to the ingroup disadvantaged status (Ball & Branscombe, 2019; Craig & Richeson, 2012, 2016). For instance, when established immigrant groups see themselves as unfairly treated by the native population or the governmental institutions, a sense of commonality and empathy with minorities who share a similarly vulnerable position is likely to arise (Craig & Richeson, 2012). These feelings have been conceived as instances of intra-minority solidarity, as they arise from the assimilation of another minority's struggles as one's own, often accompanied by a moral obligation to challenge the status quo or even by active support for outgroup rights (Ball & Branscombe, 2019; Meeusen et al., 2019; Şirin et al., 2017).

In line with the social identity approach (Turner & Reynolds, 2001), intra-minority solidarity can replace outgroup discrimination if individuals come to identify with a superordinate common category that includes the former ingroup and outgroups (e.g., Gaertner et al., 2016; Gardham & Brown, 2001). Namely, the common experience of discrimination on behalf of a certain identity dimension (e.g., race) may activate a

superordinate common category (e.g., “racial minorities”) and foster solidarity between minorities that pursue a common objective or connect through similar experiences of oppression (Ball & Branscombe, 2019; Cortland et al., 2017). Yet, research has also found that minority groups are still likely to derogate outgroups that are stigmatized along a different dimension (Craig & Richeson, 2016). For instance, (straight) racial minority members showed more negative attitudes toward sexual minorities after being exposed to racial discrimination against their group (Craig & Richeson, 2014). In similar cases, feelings of competitive victimhood might have been induced, so that groups compete with each other to claim the relative victim status for their ingroup (Young & Sullivan, 2016).

From Gender Inequalities to Attitudes toward Minorities

The literature on both relative deprivation and intra-minority solidarity has mostly focused on ethnic minorities, and women have been hardly considered (e.g., Anier et al., 2016; Craig & Richeson, 2016). As an exception, Craig et al. (2012) found that manipulated salient sexism enhanced the racial bias against Black people and Latinos in a sample of White women. Nevertheless, what remains to be clarified is whether the perception of gender inequalities – along various dimensions – relates to women’s attitudes towards other minority groups.

Apparently, women do not embody the prototypical minority group within society: They are not numerically inferior to the majority (e.g., men), have – at least in principle – the same power, and do not need to claim specific rights as migrants or sexual minorities do. Nevertheless, women represent a minoritized group, as in all societies, they are by no doubt disadvantaged in multiple domains – from work, money, time, and power to health and education – and are targets of gender violence (EIGE, 2023; ILO, 2022). This disadvantage can take up very subtle forms, is oftentimes internalized and somewhat justified (e.g., Jost &

Kay, 2005), and permeates every aspect of life, from intimate relationships to structural barriers to economic empowerment (e.g., Alba et al., 2023; Ellemers, 2018; Heilman, 2012).

In the attempt to capture the most salient and widespread experiences of gender inequalities in Western society – from the perspective of women – Ciaffoni et al. (2023) proposed that four forms of inequalities should be considered. First, women can perceive differences between men and women in the work domain, that is, restrictions in job and career opportunities for women, or biased expectations at work (i.e., *workplace inequalities*; Menegatti et al., 2021; Moscatelli et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2016). A second, more general form of gender inequalities is represented by the prevalence of *harassment towards women*, that is, a series of subtle or more explicit undesired sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, catcalling, or other behaviors that can offend, humiliate, or intimidate women (Brown et al., 2020; WHO, 2021).

Gender inequality can also concern more private domains, which is less likely to be widely debated. For instance, a still prevalent form of gender inequality is represented by *domestic imbalance*, that is, an unequal distribution of domestic duties to women. This is often so deeply ingrained in society's functioning that it is not even considered unfair (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018; Trappe et al., 2015). Finally, in daily life, women face unspoken yet potent gender inequalities, such as societal pressures to meet beauty standards, be attractive to men, and prioritize motherhood (i.e., social expectations; Ashburn-Nardo, 2017; Moscatelli et al., 2021). These expectations limit women's freedom of action (e.g., Kuipers et al., 2021; Nelson & Brown, 2019).

All in all, these studies point out that understanding reactions to gender inequalities should not ignore that inequalities in different domains are likely to have different repercussions for women’s lives. In this respect, a further critical factor is represented by

one's perception that significant others justify or contrast such inequalities. Research has highlighted that people tend to adjust their views to those that are prevalent within their social groups (e.g., Cialdini & Goldstein, 2004; Crandall et al., 2002). For instance, students exposed to a message according to which their peers (the university community) valued diversity and engaged in inclusive behaviors towards people from all social backgrounds reported greater endorsement of diversity (Murrar et al., 2020). Normative influence is even higher when norms have an injunctive (i.e., they reflect what most others approve or disapprove of) rather than a descriptive function (i.e., they reflect the perception of whether other people perform a certain behavior (Smith & Louis, 2008).

According to a social identity perspective, people are more likely to conform to the perceived norms of groups they strongly identify with (Abrams & Hogg, 2011). However, the relevance of specific sources of normative influence will vary depending on the reference context (for instance, colleagues' norms regarding the appropriate behavior will be impactful at work but easily overcome by family norms at home; Smith & Louis, 2009) as well as individuals' age, with friends becoming more influent than family as individuals approach adolescence and youth (Bracegirdle et al., 2022; McDonald & Crandall, 2015; Murrar et al., 2020). Thus, it seems plausible that women's responses to perceived gender inequality would be influenced by the perception that their close friends hold (descriptive and injunctive) pro-gender equality norms.

The Present Study

As mentioned, some critical gaps in the literature can be pointed out. Relative deprivation and intra-minority solidarity traditions have paid limited attention to women as a disadvantaged group. Furthermore, studies have not considered the heterogeneity of gender inequalities and how they relate to women's intergroup attitudes. This study aims to address these issues by examining the relationships between perceptions of gender inequality – along

the dimensions of workplace inequality, domestic inequality, sexual harassment, and social expectations (Chapter 2) – and attitudes towards other minorities: gays and lesbians, transgender women, and immigrants. In addition, it tested whether such relationships were mediated by indignation. While recognizing that perceiving gender inequalities might trigger a wider range of emotional responses, including anger and resentment. Such emotions seem more likely to be directed against the causes or the groups responsible for the disadvantage and are known to relate to actions to improve the ingroup situation (Leach et al., 2002, 2015). Indignation represents instead a moral emotion triggered by the acknowledgement of unjust circumstances and the violation of social rules and rights, in particular the rights of others (e.g., Hansberg, 2000; Neblett, 1979). Thus, as indignation is more directedly connected to the recognition of injustice rather than to intense arousal leading to action (e.g., Lazarus, 1991; Leach et al., 2015) we reasoned that it could play a role in the relationship between the perception of one's group disadvantage and attitudes toward other disadvantaged groups.

Given that friends exert a great influence on attitudes towards outgroups (McDonald & Crandall, 2015; Norman et al., 2005), and that the inclusion of women of different ages, marital, and occupational status in our sample would have rendered it difficult to consider other types of groups (e.g., colleagues or family), in this study we explored whether women's responses to perceived gender inequality were moderated by perceived friends' norms about supporting gender equality. Since political orientation and age are generally associated with attitudes towards LGBTQ+ minorities and immigrants – with left-wing oriented and younger people being more favorable towards those groups compared to right-wing oriented and older people (Abdelaaty & Steele, 2022; Prati et al., 2018; Russo et al., 2019) – we included political orientation and age as covariates in the analyses. Finally, participants' sexual orientation was included as a covariate, since more favorable attitudes toward gay and lesbian and trans women can be expected by queer rather than heterosexual people.

The study was run in Italy, a context where stereotypic views of women and gender inequalities are quite widespread (ISTAT, 2019; Moscatelli et al., 2021; Ostuni et al., 2022). For instance, the gender employment gap reaches 20%, which is twice as high as in most European countries, and at least 21% of women undergo sexual violence in their lives (EIGE, 2015). As claimed by Galizzi et al. (2023), patriarchy, intended as male dominance, persists and permeates the Italian culture within the family and society.

In general terms, different predictions might be advanced considering the existing literature. Based on relative deprivation theory (Runciman, 1966; Smith & Pettigrew, 2014), one might expect that the more women are aware of gender inequalities and experience indignation, they would show greater prejudice against other disadvantaged and stigmatized groups. Conversely, drawing from research on intra-minority solidarity (Craig & Richeson, 2016), it is possible that women who perceive gender inequalities to a greater extent and feel greater indignation, would be more sympathetic toward other minorities and therefore report more positive attitudes toward them.

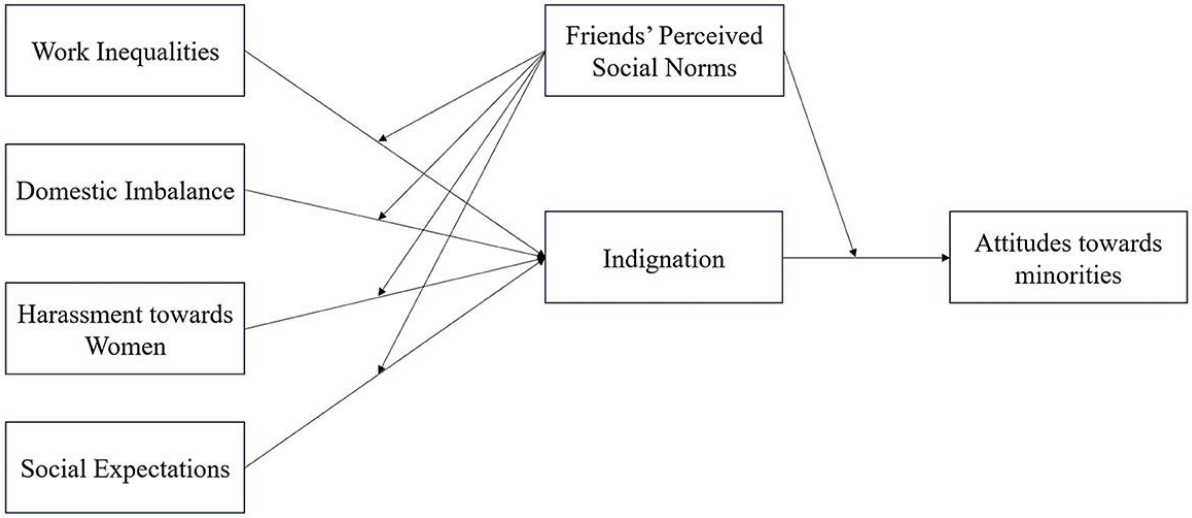
Even though this study had an explorative nature, noticing some specificities about the three outgroups considered can help advance tentative expectations. With respect to gays and lesbians, they are not necessarily stigmatized along the same identity dimension as women, but both groups suffer discrimination stemming from the endorsement of typically masculine and patriarchal views, which may make identifying shared external threats easier (Inglehart et al., 2017). Furthermore, beyond the potential overlap between the two groups (i.e., lesbian women), coalitions between activists for gender and sexual equality are common, too (Uysal et al., 2022). Intra-minority solidarity – that is, positive associations between gender inequalities and favorable attitudes towards gays and lesbians – seems therefore plausible.

Regarding transgender women, the situation is more complex. Even though both transgender and cisgender women are stigmatized along the same identity dimension, cisgender women sometimes perceive transgender women as an identity threat (Broussard & Warner, 2019). One such example is the ongoing debate around womanhood and trans women's right to access "women's spaces" (Leante, 2021; Maxwell et al., 2023). Nevertheless, the spreading of "transfeminism" – a branch of feminism that endorses the principles of intersectionality – has underlined the importance of fighting patriarchal culture and pursuing the common goal of gender equality (Bunker, 2023). Thus, despite the complexity of the positions concerning trans women, it seems plausible that a greater perception of gender inequalities would be related to more positive views of trans women.

Of the three groups, that of migrants is the one that can be seen as more distant from women, because stigmatized on a completely different dimension (race vs. gender). While gender discrimination assumes very different forms and often goes undetected (Argüello-Gutiérrez et al., 2023; Woodzicka et al., 2015), in Italy discrimination against migrants often takes quite blatant forms and translates into overt positions against migrants' rights (e.g., Fulvi, 2022). Furthermore, migrants, especially those from non-Western countries, are often depicted as promoting sexist views of women and even associated with episodes of sexual abuse of women (Belpietro, 2022). Despite the possible overlap (i.e., women migrants), it seems hard to expect intra-minority solidarity when migrants are considered as an outgroup, and the opposite pattern (that is, higher perception of gender inequalities related to less favorable attitudes toward migrants) appears more plausible. Finally, given that people tend to adjust their views to the perceived normative views of the groups they belong to (e.g., Crandall et al., 2002), one might expect that a greater perception that one's friends support gender equality would result in more positive associations between perceptions of gender inequality, indignation, and favorable attitudes toward gays, lesbians, and trans women.

Figure 6-1.

Schematic representation of the path analysis model for attitudes towards minorities.



Materials and Method

Participation in the study was completely voluntary. We recruited 657 Italian participants from the general population through personal contacts and free advertisements on social media (Facebook, Instagram, Telegram). From this initial sample, we eliminated participants who did not give their informed consent (n = 2) or failed to complete the central questions for this study (n = 151). We also excluded participants who identified as men (n = 2) and those who did not disclose their gender (n = 2). Furthermore, to ensure better-quality data, throughout the questionnaire, we added three attention checks stating, "If you are paying attention, please answer strongly disagree" and we excluded those who failed more than one of three attention checks (n = 6). The final sample was made of 493 participants (M_{age} = 24.05, SD = 5.74; age ranged from 18–64). We decided to recruit at least 400 participants, as according to Fritz and Mackinnon (2007), these are sufficient to detect small/medium indirect effects in mediation, assuming an alpha of 0.05 and a power of 0.80. Demographic characteristics can be found in the Supplementary Materials.

Measures

After giving informed consent, participants were presented with measures of perceptions of gender inequalities, indignation, friends' norms about supporting gender equality, and attitudes towards gays and lesbians, trans women, and migrants. Last, they reported demographic information (age, nationality, gender, sexual orientation) and political orientation. In total, the questionnaire took approximately 8-12 minutes to be completed.

Perceptions of gender inequalities were measured with the 16 items of the Multidimensional Gender Inequalities Perception Inventory – Women's form (MGIPI-W; Chapter 2). An example item is "When looking for a job, women are less likely to be hired than men." Responses were given on a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). All the subscales exhibited good reliability levels (*Domestic Imbalance*, with α =.81, *Harassment towards Women*, with α =.71, *Work Inequalities*, with α =.80, and *Social Expectations*, with α =.76).

Participants' level of indignation was measured by asking "When thinking about inequalities between men and women, how much indignation do you feel?" (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*; Chapter 2). To measure close friends' perceived social norms we included 5 ad hoc items assessing descriptive and injunctive norms around supporting gender equality (α =.75). Two example items are "My closest friends support gender equality" and "My closest friends would approve if I supported pink quotas" (1 = *not at all*; 7 = *very much*).

Attitudes towards gay people were measured with the Attitudes towards Homosexuality Scale (Anderson et al., 2018), containing 16 items such as "Gay people disgust me" (α = .91). Attitudes towards trans women were measured with the relevant subscale of the Attitudes toward Transgender Men and Women scale (ATTMW; Billard, 2018), including 12 items such as "Transgender women are defying nature" (α = .96). As in the original paper, the items followed a definition of "transgender women". For these two indexes, responses were given on a 7-point Likert scale, from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7

(*strongly agree*). Attitudes towards migrants in Italy (α = .96) were assessed by asking participants how favorable they were towards migrants from Eastern Europe, North Africa, Central Africa, Asia, and Latin America on a scale from 0 (*not at all favorable*) to 10 (*completely favorable*), like in Dambrun et al. (2006). Finally, participants had to indicate their political orientation on a slider from 0 (*close to left-wing ideas*) to 100 (*close to right-wing ideas*), a measure that is becoming rather common in social psychology and has the advantage of allowing participants to indicate their orientation on a continuous rather than discrete scale (Castelli et al., 2022; Cervone et al., 2023).

Results

Descriptive Statistics and Confirmatory Factor Analysis

All descriptive statistics and correlations among measures are presented in Table 6-1. Before assessing the moderated mediation models, we run confirmatory factor analysis for each measure (except the single-item measure of indignation and the demographic covariates).

Table 6-1.

Descriptive statistics and correlations among variables.

	Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
1	Work Inequalities	5.83	0.95											
2	Domestic Imbalance	5.71	1.11	.36**										
3	Harassment towards Women	6.37	0.70	.59**	.43**									
4	Social Expectations	5.28	1.08	.56**	.32**	.60**								
5	Indignation	5.86	1.30	.36**	.14**	.33**	.26**							
6	Perceived Social Norms	5.63	0.91	.05	-.06	.13**	.09	.02						
7	Attitudes towards Homosexuality	6.33	0.73	.26**	.03	.31**	.35**	.28**	.33**					
8	Attitudes towards Trans Women	6.15	1.10	.32**	.04	.30**	.34**	.25**	.27**	.80**				
9	Attitudes towards Migrants	8.61	1.93	.16**	.01	.14**	.16**	.15**	.22**	.49**	.52**			
10	Age	24.05	5.74	-.09	-.06	-.27**	-.19**	.01	-.06	-.22**	-.16**	-.13**		
11	Sexual Orientation (dummy)	--	--	.04	-.02	.06	.13**	-.01	.06	.24**	.20**	.14**	-.13**	
12	Political Orientation	29.47	21.97	-.24**	.01	-.13**	-.20**	-.13**	-.16**	-.45**	-.48**	-.37**	.02	-.23**

Note. **p < .01, *p < .05

All the analyses were conducted in Mplus 8.3 (Muthén & Muthén, 2019) using the Maximum Likelihood with Robust standard errors (MLR) estimator (Satorra & Bentler, 2001). In evaluating the goodness of fit for the CFA and the main analyses, we considered several indices (Schumacker & Lomax, 2010): CFI and TLI, with values exceeding 0.90 signifying acceptable fit and values above 0.95 suggest excellent; SRMR, for which values lower than 0.8 indicate a good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999); RMSEA, where values below 0.05 denote excellent fit (Byrne, 2011). We also inspected the 90% confidence interval of the RMSEA: when the upper bound of this confidence interval is ≤ 0.10, the model fit can be considered acceptable (Chen et al., 2008). Fit indices are provided in Table 6-2.

Table 6-2.

Fit indices for the three models being tested in this research.

Model	RMSEA	90% CI	CFI	TLI	SRMR
Attitudes towards Homosexuality	0.026	[0.000, 0.045]	0.982	0.960	0.048
Attitudes towards Trans Women	0.026	[0.000, 0.044]	0.982	0.960	0.048
Attitudes towards Migrants	0.024	[0.000, 0.043]	0.982	0.959	0.048

Note. Values of RMSEA and its 90% confidence interval, CFI, TLI and SRMR for each model tested in this study.

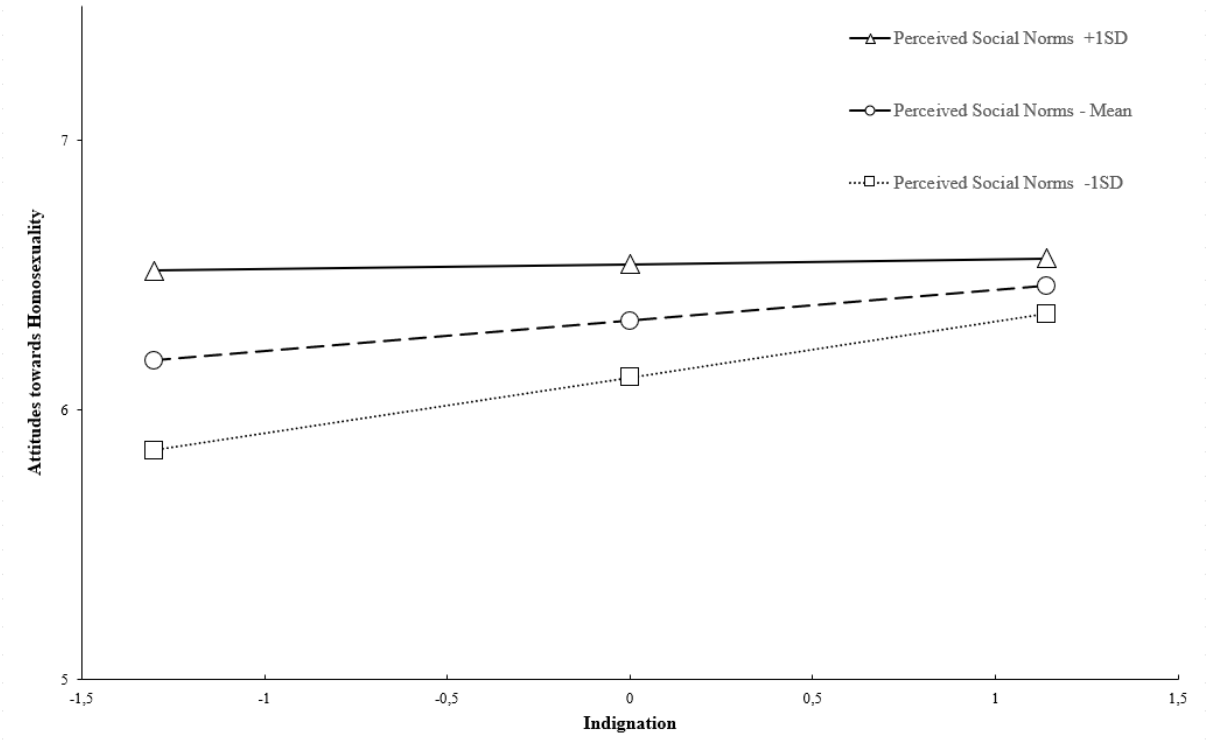
Considering the CFA, all the fit indices were acceptable for all measures, except for the CFI and TFI of the Attitudes Towards Homosexuality scale which were slightly below the cutoff of .09 (.86 and .84, respectively). Since the validity of the scale has been established in various contexts (Anderson et al., 2018; Falomir-Pichastor et al., 2019; Valsecchi et al., 2022), and the RMSEA and SRMR index were acceptable, we reasoned that these minor deviations from the cutoff values do not pose a significant threat to its reliability.

Path analyses

For the main analyses, we estimated the same path analysis model on each measure of attitudes toward a minority group. The four components of perceptions of gender inequalities were included as predictors and correlated with each other (in line with the previous chapters). Indignation was entered as a mediator. Perceived social norms were entered as a potential moderator of the relationships between perceptions of gender inequalities and indignation, as well as the relationship between indignation and each outcome variable (see Figure 6-2). Furthermore, political orientation, age and whether respondents self-identified as straight or queer were added as covariates. All variables were observed variables. The variables defining the interaction terms were centered around their mean.

Figure 6-2.

Attitudes towards Homosexuality: Moderation Analysis



Note. Graphical representation of the moderation effect of perceived social norms on the relationship between indignation and attitudes towards homosexuality.

Given that we tested three models that differed in the outcome variable only, the paths from the covariates to the predictors, the moderator, and the mediator, as well as the paths between the predictors and the mediator remained consistent across the three models and are reported in Table 6-3. Only perceptions of workplace inequalities and harassment towards women turned out to be significantly related to the proposed mediator: the more participants perceived gender inequalities in these two domains, the more indignation they experienced when thinking about gender inequalities.

Table 6-3.

Associations between covariates, predictors, and mediator.

Effect	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Indignation					
Work Inequalities	0.34	0.08	0.17	0.50	.000
Domestic Imbalance	-0.06	0.06	-0.17	0.05	.258
Harassment towards Women	0.43	0.13	0.18	0.68	.001
Social Expectations	0.01	0.08	-0.14	0.17	.861
Perceived Social Norms	-0.05	0.06	-0.17	0.07	.423
Work Ineq. x Perceived Social Norms	< -0.01	0.08	-0.11	0.11	.987
Domestic Imb. x Perceived Social Norms	0.01	0.06	-0.08	0.10	.880
Harassment x Perceived Social Norms	0.10	0.13	-0.07	0.16	.452
Expectations x Perceived Social Norms	0.02	0.07	-0.09	0.12	.802
Political Orientation	< -0.01	< 0.01	-0.01	< 0.01	.182
Age	0.02	0.01	< -0.01	0.04	.077
Queer vs straight [a]	-0.10	0.16	-0.40	0.21	.545
Perceived Social Norms					
Political Orientation	-0.01	< 0.01	-0.01	< -0.01	.001
Age	-0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.01	.247
Queer vs straight [a]	0.08	0.10	-0.12	0.28	.421
Work Inequalities					
Political Orientation	-0.01	< 0.01	-0.02	-0.01	.000
Age	-0.01	0.01	-0.03	0.01	.151
Queer vs straight[a]	-0.08	0.11	-0.31	0.14	.472
Domestic Imbalance					
Political Orientation	0.00	< 0.01	-0.01	0.01	.917
Age	-0.01	0.01	-0.03	0.01	.173
Queer vs straight[a]	-0.06	0.15	-0.35	0.23	.690
Harassment towards women					
Political Orientation	< -0.01	< 0.01	-0.01	< -0.01	.013
Age	-0.03	0.01	-0.05	-0.02	.000
Queer vs straight[a]	-0.03	0.09	-0.20	0.14	.734
Social Expectations					
Political Orientation	-0.01	< 0.01	-0.01	< -0.01	.000
Age	-0.03	0.01	-0.05	-0.01	.002
Queer vs straight[a]	0.23	0.11	0.01	0.46	.041

Note. Estimates, standard errors, confidence intervals and p-values for each effect. CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit; [a] 0 = straight, 1 = queer. Bolded variables are the significant predictors.

Attitudes towards gays and lesbians

The model on attitudes towards gays and lesbians explained 42.30% of the total variance ($R^2 = 0.42$). Of the four components of perceptions of gender inequalities, only the social expectations component had a significant and positive direct association with attitudes toward gays and lesbians (Table 6-4). Indignation was also positively associated with attitudes towards gays and lesbians and worked as a mediator of perceived workplace inequalities and harassment towards women, as proved by the two positive indirect effects.

Table 6-4.

Direct and indirect effects on Attitudes towards Homosexuality.

Effect	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Direct Effects					
Attitudes towards Homosexuality					
Work Inequalities	-0.01	0.05	-0.11	0.09	.847
Domestic Imbalance	-0.04	0.03	-0.09	0.02	.181
Harassment towards Women	0.07	0.06	-0.05	0.20	.263
Social Expectations	0.10	0.04	0.03	0.17	.005
Indignation	0.11	0.03	0.06	0.16	.000
Perceived Social Norms	0.20	0.03	0.14	0.27	.000
Indignation x Perceived Social Norms	-0.09	0.03	-0.15	-0.03	.003
Political Orientation	-0.01	< 0.01	-0.01	-0.01	.000
Age	-0.02	0.01	-0.03	-0.01	.001
Queer vs straight[a]	0.23	0.05	0.13	0.34	.000
Indirect Effects					
Work Ineq. > Indignation > Attitudes	0.04	0.01	0.01	0.06	.004
Domestic Imb. > Indignation > Attitudes	-0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.01	.273
Harassment > Indignation > Attitudes	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.08	.012
Expectations > Indignation > Attitudes	< 0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.02	.860

Note. Estimates, standard errors, confidence intervals and p-values for each effect. CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit; [a] 0 = straight, 1 = queer. Bolded variables are the significant predictors.

Perceiving that one's group of friends support equality was positively associated with favorable attitudes towards gays and lesbians, and moderated the relationship between indignation and attitudes, as shown by the significant interaction between indignation and perceived social norms. When indignation was low, participants who perceived that their

friends supported gender equality showed more favorable attitudes towards gays and lesbians than participants who perceived lower support from their friends (see supplementary material). Finally, all three covariates considered in the model were significantly associated with the outcome variable, so that left-wing, younger, and queer participants exhibited more favorable attitudes towards gays and lesbians.

Attitudes towards Trans Women

The model assessing attitudes towards trans women accounted for 36.90% of the total variability (R^2 = .37). Among the four components gauging perceptions of gender inequalities, only that of social expectations had a significant and positive direct association with attitudes towards trans women (see Table 6-5). Indignation was positively linked to the outcome variable, and, in line with the previous model, we observed positive indirect effects of perception of workplace inequalities and harassment against women through indignation.

The perception of friends' social norms in favor of gender equality was also positively related to attitudes towards trans women. Although the interaction term appears to be significant according to the p-value indication, it was not significant when considering the confidence interval. For the sake of thoroughness, the pattern seems aligned with what was found in the previous model: Participants who experienced low indignation showed more favorable attitudes towards trans women when they reported a higher perception of social norms in favor of gender equality (see supplementary material). Furthermore, all three covariates displayed significant associations with the outcome, indicating that individuals identifying as left-wing, younger, and queer tended to hold more positive attitudes towards trans women.

Table 6-5.

Direct and indirect effects on Attitudes towards Trans Women.

Effect	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Direct Effects					
Attitudes towards Trans Women					
Work Inequalities	0.09	0.07	-0.05	0.24	.205
Domestic Imbalance	-0.06	0.05	-0.15	0.03	.159
Harassment towards Women	0.09	0.09	-0.08	0.27	.281
Social Expectations	0.13	0.06	0.02	0.24	.022
Indignation	0.12	0.04	0.04	0.19	.002
Perceived Social Norms	0.22	0.05	0.13	0.31	.000
Indignation x Perceived Social Norms	-0.08	0.04	-0.16	< 0.01	.049
Political Orientation	-0.02	< 0.01	-0.02	-0.01	.000
Age	-0.02	0.01	-0.03	< -0.01	.022
Queer vs straight[a]	0.24	0.08	0.08	0.40	.003
Indirect Effects					
Work Ineq. > Indignation > Attitudes	0.04	0.02	0.01	0.07	.015
Domestic Imb. > Indignation > Attitudes	-0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.01	.299
Harassment > Indignation > Attitudes	0.05	0.02	0.01	0.09	.025
Expectations > Indignation > Attitudes	< 0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.02	.860

Note. Estimates, standard errors, confidence intervals and p-values for each effect. CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit; [a] 0 = straight, 1 = queer. Bolded variables are the significant predictors.

Attitudes towards Migrants

The model analyzing attitudes towards migrants indicated that 19.60% of the overall variability was accounted for (R^2 = .20). None of the four components evaluating perceptions of gender inequalities was significantly related to attitudes towards migrants (see Table 6-6). Yet, feelings of indignation and perceived social norms were positively associated with attitudes towards migrants. No indirect effects were found to be significant.

Furthermore, of the three covariates added to the model, only political orientation and age showed significant associations with the outcome variable. Individuals who identified as left-wing or were younger hold more positive attitudes towards migrants.

Table 6-6.

Direct and indirect effects on Attitudes towards Migrants.

Effect	Estimate	*SE*	95% CI		*p*
			LL	*UL*	
Direct Effects					
Attitudes towards Migrants					
Work Inequalities	0.03	0.15	-0.26	0.33	.833
Domestic Imbalance	-0.01	0.08	-0.17	0.15	.898
Harassment towards Women	-0.03	0.17	-0.37	0.30	.849
Social Expectations	0.06	0.10	-0.13	0.25	.517
Indignation	0.15	0.07	< 0.01	0.29	.045
Perceived Social Norms	0.34	0.10	0.15	0.54	.001
Indignation x Perceived Social Norms	-0.12	0.09	-0.29	0.06	.184
Political Orientation	-0.03	< 0.01	-0.04	-0.02	.000
Age	-0.04	0.02	-0.07	< -0.01	.037
Queer vs straight[a]	0.19	0.19	-0.18	0.55	.323
Indirect Effects					
Work Ineq. > Indignation > Attitudes	0.05	0.03	-0.01	0.11	.079
Domestic Imb. > Indignation > Attitudes	-0.01	0.01	-0.03	0.01	.340
Harassment > Indignation > Attitudes	0.06	0.04	-0.01	0.14	.100
Expectations > Indignation > Attitudes	< 0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.02	.858

Note. Estimates, standard errors, confidence intervals and p-values for each effect. CI = confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; *UL* = upper limit; [a] 0 = straight, 1 = queer. Bolded variables are the significant predictors.

Discussion

The present study aimed to examine whether and how women's perceptions of gender inequalities were related to attitudes toward other minority groups, that is, gays and lesbians, transgender women, and migrants. Doing this, it bridged critical gaps in the literature, in that it considered a group that is relatively underrepresented in research concerning minority groups and delved into women's responses to the multifaced experience of gender inequalities. Moreover, albeit explorative, this study allowed us to test different predictions that can be drawn based on different theoretical frameworks, in particular, relative deprivation theory (Runciman, 1966; Smith et al., 2012) and intra-minority solidarity research (Craig & Richeson, 2016).

Overall, the findings pointed out positive associations between the perception of gender inequalities and favorable attitudes towards two of the groups considered, that is, gay people and trans women, revealing the prevalence of intra-minority solidarity. Such a logic, however, does not extend to all minorities, as suggested by the lack of significant relationships between the perception of gender inequalities and attitudes toward migrants.

Perceptions of Gender Inequalities and Intra-minority Solidarity

As mentioned, women who perceived greater gender inequalities reported more favorable attitudes toward gays, lesbians, and trans women. The perception that women are targets of gendered social expectations had a direct association with such outcomes, whereas the findings revealed indirect effects for workplace inequality and harassment toward women. Namely, recognizing gender inequalities along such dimensions enhanced women's experience of the moral emotion of indignation, which in turn accounted for the increased positivity toward gays, lesbians, and trans women. Overall, these findings are consistent with patterns of intra-minority solidarity (Craig & Richeson, 2016): the more women are aware of being subjected to inequalities – as a group – the more they show positive views of gay people and trans women.

However, the findings showed no direct or indirect links between perception of gender inequalities and attitudes toward migrants, which were instead positively associated with indignation. This finding suggests that emotional responses to inequalities, per se, might play a critical role that can be (at least partially) independent from the cognitive appraisal of women's conditions and may represent a critical step in fostering positive intergroup attitudes within minorities.

In an exploratory manner, our study also examined whether friends' norms regarding support for gender equality acted as a moderator of the relationships between perceptions of

gender inequality, indignation, and attitudes toward minority groups. The findings only revealed some evidence of moderation with respect to the link between indignation and attitudes toward gays and lesbians, suggesting that the perception that close others support equality somehow compensates individual's low feeling of indignation for inequalities. It is also interesting that perceived social norms were directly related to more favorable attitudes toward all the groups considered. This finding suggests that being a member of a close group that supports (gender) equality might translate into more favorable attitudes toward a variety of different actions, including those aimed at improving other minorities' positions. While we are aware that more evidence is needed to support the latter contention, we believe that the role of close groups' norms deserves more attention to elucidate the conditions underlying intra-minority solidarity.

Finally, in our study, all models considered the same set of covariates, which included age, political orientation, and participants' sexual orientation. Age and political orientation emerged as significant predictors for each of our measured outcomes, with younger participants and those who identified as left-wing politically reporting more favorable attitudes towards the three minorities considered. Additionally, queer respondents showed more favorable attitudes toward gay people and trans women. These findings align with previous evidence collected in Italy and other contexts (Abdelaaty & Steele, 2022; Maratia et al., 2023; Prati et al., 2018; Russo et al., 2019).

Moreover, looking at the findings from a social identity complexity (SIC) perspective (Roccas & Brewer, 2002), one may wonder whether the different patterns we observed for migrants reflect the establishing of a unique intersection of identities, which leads to more positive attitudes toward specific minority groups (namely, gays and lesbians, and trans women) while not extending inclusivity to migrants. Future research could explore the

intricate organization of these identities and how this organization influences varying degrees of acceptance of other minorities within the context of intergroup attitudes.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Theoretically, these findings contribute to the understanding of women's experience of gender inequalities and their correlates. Perceiving gender inequalities is not only related to reduced well-being or higher support for gender equality actions (Davis & Robinson, 1991; Kinias & Kim, 2012) but it is also associated with more positive attitudes toward sexual and gender minorities.

These findings also add to previous studies on intra-minority solidarity (Craig & Richeson, 2016). Whereas previous studies in this field found that women exposed to manipulated sexism showed more racial and antigay bias (Craig et al., 2012), the current findings highlighted that women's awareness of gender inequalities is positively related to attitudes toward gay people and transgender women (but not toward migrants). Such a discrepancy might be due to the lower threat that women possibly experienced in this study compared to that of Craig et al. (2012), where sexism was purposely made salient, or, alternatively, to the fact that we led respondents to focus on the variety of forms that gender inequalities can take. Thinking of the different facets of discrimination against women might have led respondents to be more empathetic toward other stigmatized groups and more prone to recognize that they, too, are discriminated against along various dimensions, thus avoiding defensive reactions and feelings of competitive victimhood (Noor et al., 2012).

Concerning the last point, it is important to underline that attitudes towards minorities (which constitute our outcome measures) can be conceived as an aspect of intra-minority solidarity, which nevertheless constitutes a more complex concept (e.g., Burson & Godfrey, 2020). Solidarity within intra-minority contexts can involve – besides attitudes and liking –

support for outgroup rights (Cortland et al., 2017) or endorsement of collaborative efforts or political action on behalf of an outgroup (Glasford & Calcagno, 2012). While we believe that research on intra-minority solidarity can offer a lens through which to look at the phenomenon examined in the current study, future research should test whether perceiving gender inequalities actually translate into concrete alliance with minority outgroups (e.g., actions supporting LGBTQ+ rights).

One more consideration and possible explanation of the observed results resides in the perceived commonalities with the considered groups. Reflecting upon the different facets of gender inequalities, women might have found it easier to divert the focus from their specific condition and bring their attention to the similarities with the situation of gays, lesbians, and trans women, rather than with that of migrants. Despite the specificities of the societal treatment towards those groups, cisgender women, gay people, and trans women are all targets of threats and discrimination that stem from a patriarchal culture (Uysal et al., 2022; Valdes, 1996). Theoretically, these findings seem, therefore, in line with a common identity model framework (Dovidio et al., 2007), according to which if members of different groups are induced to conceive themselves as parts of a single superordinate group, ingroup favoritism will be directed towards the new, more inclusive ingroup and therefore results in more positive attitudes toward the former outgroup. Such a theoretical model is consistent with previous evidence on intra-minority solidarity (Cortland et al., 2017; Craig & Richeson, 2012) and with the contention that, in the present study, making salient gender inequalities might have elicited recategorization processes and led women to feel as part of a more inclusive ingroup including gay people and trans women and characterized by a shared fate of discrimination by the majority group of cisgender, heterosexual men.

As a further support for such a contention, our findings revealed that perceiving gender inequalities in the domain of social expectations, workplace, and harassment towards

women was related to positive attitudes towards gay people and trans women – possibly because women can easily imagine that members of such groups are targets of similar treatment as women along these dimensions. Domestic imbalance, a form of inequality that affects women but not necessarily sexual and gender minorities, was unrelated to attitudes toward gay people and trans women, and, interestingly, was not even associated with indignation, possibly because asymmetries in the domestic load are so deeply embedded in feminine norms that they do not arouse strong emotional responses in women (e.g., Cerrato & Cifre, 2018). Thus, these findings are in line with previous evidence that relating to another minority's type of oppression can facilitate solidarity (Burson & Godfrey, 2020; Cortland et al., 2017) and highlight the importance of having a nuanced look at structural inequality and consider the different ways by which structural inequality reproduces itself.

Finally, these findings also speak to the literature on relative deprivation. As discussed before, based on the relative deprivation theory (Runciman, 1966), one should have expected women's perception of gender inequalities to be related to *less* positive attitudes towards other minority groups. Whereas there was evidence of intra-minority solidarity toward sexual and gender minorities, the lack of correlations between perception of gender inequalities and attitudes toward migrants – as well as the significant association between indignation and favorable attitudes toward them – do not align with previous evidence on patterns of relative deprivation and intergroup hostility. However, it should be noted that the construct of perception of gender inequalities does not exactly coincide with that of relative deprivation (Smith et al., 2012). In fact, in the current study, the focus was on the cognitive awareness of inequalities, whereas we did not measure how legitimate they were considered (a critical aspect of the relative deprivation construct). Of course, further studies addressing the distinct role of perception (in terms of mere recognition), justice-related considerations, and emotional reaction would help clarify women's responses to gender inequalities.

Overall, these findings pave the way for interventions aimed at improving minority groups' conditions. Women often fail to recognize sexism and gender inequalities (Becker, 2010; Radke et al., 2016), and, even when they do, injunctive feminine norms of kindness and modesty make it hard to express group-based anger against inequalities (Mahalik et al., 2005). Based on these findings, one might claim that raising women's or other minority members' awareness of inequalities can help them reflect upon others' situations and can represent a first step toward the promotion of coalitional attitudes (for a similar reasoning, see Craig & Richeson, 2016). Within contexts where multiple groups grapple with the dominance of a specific culture (usually White, patriarchal, ableist, and heteronormative, at least in Western countries; Goodley, 2014), forging coalitions emerges as one of the most promising avenues to progress and achieve lasting social change. Whereas our results can only suggest possible factors that are likely to favor such outcomes – above all, perceived intergroup similarities and common threats – professionals should be made aware of the potential of interventions based on raising the awareness of one's and other groups' situations.

In this regard, valuable insights can be gleaned from the experience of the LGBTQ+ community – whereby the common denominator is the significant social rejection members experience for belonging to gender and sexual minorities – and its successful efforts to come together with the disability community by prompting introspection regarding the shared experiences of feeling marginalized and rejected by society (Ball & Branscombe, 2019; Patterson et al., 2015). Similarly, strategic allyships between feminists and activists for LGBTQ+ rights can derive from the awareness of a common threat and the recognition of shared advantages in cooperating for social change (Acar & Uluğ, 2016; Uysal et al., 2022).

Limitations and Future Directions

The study comes with several limitations. First, by relying on cross-sectional data, we can only make limited inferences about the relationships among the variables, which need to

be explored further by implementing longitudinal or experimental designs. Moreover, this study did not measure whether women felt a common fate or shared goals with sexual and gender minorities. To support our interpretation of the present results in terms of intra-minority solidarity, future studies should examine whether positive attitudes toward other minority groups translate into active cooperation or actions in favor of those groups (Burson & Godfrey, 2020). Moreover, they should explore the role of possible intervening variables, such as recategorization processes, empathy and/or the identification of shared threats.

In Italy, where the study was conducted, traditional gender stereotypes and patriarchy are still pervasive (e.g., ISTAT, 2019; Mazzuca et al., 2022; Pagliaro et al., 2020). In such a context, it seems likely that women who are aware of male domination – as most women in our sample – might easily identify patriarchal culture as a critical threat to them as well as to other groups accused of undermining traditional values or who openly fight against patriarchy, such as LGBTQIA+ people. Such feelings of shared fate and common threat can explain why perceiving higher levels of gender inequalities was accompanied by more favorable views towards gay people and transgender women but not immigrant people, to which such feelings of shared destiny most likely do not apply. It is, therefore, crucial that future research clarify the conditions under which the awareness of being a disadvantaged group may result in more positive or vice versa discriminatory attitudes and behaviors toward other minorities.

Future studies should also provide more evidence on the role of perceived social norms in favor of greater equality for one's group in promoting more positive attitudes toward other minorities, hopefully leading to a greater willingness to cooperate. In a related way, it would be important to explore individuals' motivation to adhere to social norms and take a more nuanced view of such norms to delve more in-depth into their influence on women's attitudes. First, it would be interesting to understand whether women are more

willing to adhere to norms endorsed by male or female friends. In the former case, one might speculate that, even in that case, women are somehow subjected to men's dominance; at the same time, such a result would prove the importance of the male alliance in fighting gender inequalities (Subašić et al., 2018). Moreover, future studies might focus on different sources of normative influence (e.g., Smith & Louis, 2009) and consider groups that might be especially relevant with respect to specific dimensions of gender inequality. For instance, perceived family norms might play a key role in supporting gender parity in the domestic sphere, whereas the perception that one's colleagues support gender parity at work might be critical when women focus on work-related inequalities.

As mentioned, the findings revealed significant associations between the three covariates we considered (i.e., political orientation, age, and sexual orientation) and attitudes toward the three minority groups, as could be expected based on previous literature (e.g., Prati et al., 2018; Russo et al., 2019; Salvati et al., 2023). Even though the analyses revealed significant effects beyond what could be attributed to these covariates, it is important to acknowledge that our sample was characterized by a predominantly young, left-leaning demographic, with a relatively high proportion of LGBTQIA+ individuals (16.5%). Thus, future studies should try to reach a more balanced and representative sample. Related to this, it is also important to recognize that by referring to women as a category, we by no means intended to deny that other categories are likely to intersect with gender and define unique experiences of discrimination and disadvantage. For instance, as pointed out by the "intersectionality" framework (Greenwood, 2008; Shields, 2008), we should keep in mind that women of other ethnic groups or women with a disability can experience violence or social expectations differently from white or women without a disability. In more general terms, even though the field has not fully come up with methodological answers to acknowledge intersectionality, we know that experiences of inequality are no one-size-fits-all

phenomena, and multiple social identities (gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, …) can overlap to shape qualitatively and quantitively different experiences of inequality.

Conclusion

Our study offers insights into the understanding of women's experience as a disadvantaged, minoritized group within society. The examination of multiple dimensions of gender inequality enriches our understanding of how gender inequalities intersect and relate to attitudes towards other minority groups. This nuanced approach highlights the complexity of the interplay between different forms of gender inequality and intergroup attitudes. Since recognizing gender inequalities, and the emotional response they raise, seems to be accompanied by higher sensitivity toward other minorities (at least, sexual and gender minorities), this study highlights the importance of interventions that increase individuals' awareness of their group's disadvantaged position while fostering contemplation on the oppression experienced by other minority groups. Leveraging the current findings to develop concrete interventions holds great potential for policymakers and activists dedicated to driving social change.

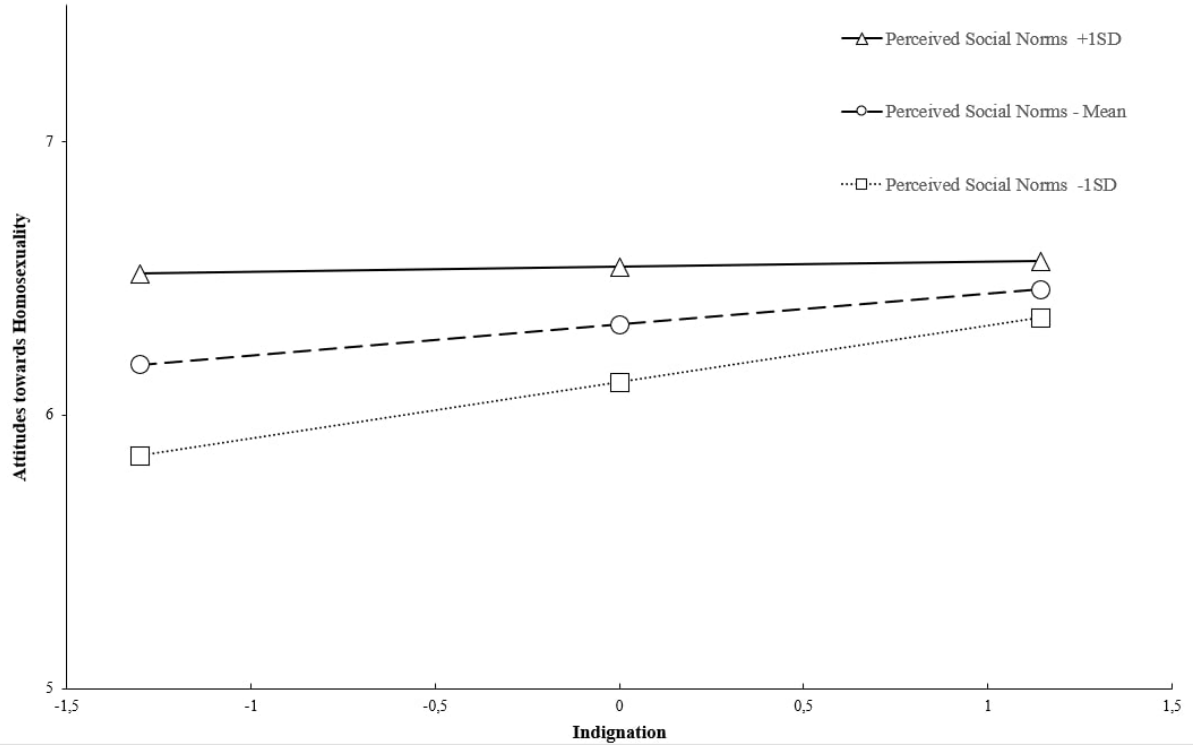
Section D Supplementary Materials

Supplementary Material 1. Sociodemographic characteristics of participants.

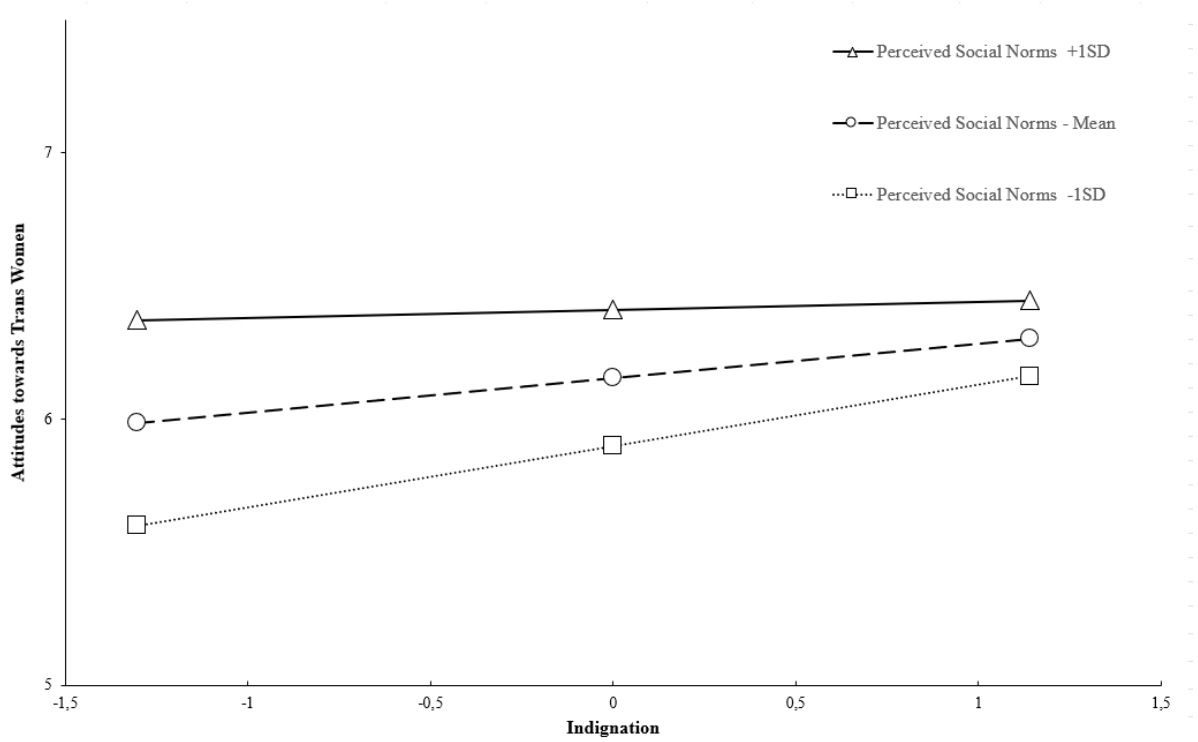
Demographic characteristic	*N*=493	
	n	%
Gender		
Women	489	99.20
Men	--	--
Non-binary	4	0.80
Nationality		
Italian	466	94.60
Portuguese	1	0.20
Moldavian	1	0.20
Brazilian	1	0.20
Albanian	4	0.80
Indian	1	0.20
Bulgarian	1	0.20
Tunisian	2	0.40
Romanian	1	0.20
Swiss	1	0.20
No answer at all	14	2.80
Sexual orientation		
Straight	396	80.40
Bisexual	45	9.10
Homosexual	8	1.60
Pansexual	16	3.20
Asexual	4	0.80
Queer	3	0.60
Other	6	1.20
Preferred not to say	8	1.60
No answer at all	7	1.50
Educational level*		
High school	247	50.20
Bachelor's degree	176	35.80
Master's degree	54	10.8
Second Level Master	1	0.20
PhD	4	0.80
Other types of education	1	0.20
No answer at all	10	2.00
Employment		
Unemployed	2	0.40
Student	108	21.90
Employed	345	70.00
Employed and student	22	4.50
Looking for 1st occupation	3	0.60
Housewife	4	0.80
Retired	1	0.20
Preferred not to say	1	0.20
No answer at all	7	1.40

Supplementary Material 2. Moderation graphs.

Graphical representation of the moderation analysis of perceived social norms on the association between indignation and attitudes towards homosexuality.



Graphical representation of the moderation analysis of perceived social norms on the association between indignation and attitudes towards trans women.



Chapter 7

General Discussion

The current dissertation aimed to provide a thorough understanding of gender inequalities affecting women, analyzing the way those inequalities are perceived and investigating some of women's psychological reactions to such inequalities. In particular, adopting a multidimensional lens, **Section A** investigated how women perceive gender inequalities and uncovered four main components: workplace inequalities, harassment towards women, social expectations, and domestic imbalance. The five studies included in this section provided evidence of the robustness of this conceptualization across five different samples of women and non-binary people socialized as women and across two different cultural contexts, namely Italy and the UK. Furthermore, these studies also brought initial evidence to the fact that adopting a multidimensional approach to the study of gender inequalities proved more useful than a unidimensional approach and that these different aspects of gender inequalities are associated with different psychological reactions.

Building on this first set of studies, the following sections investigated different psychological outcomes that perceived gender inequalities can influence. First, **Section B** aimed to study the interplay of these different components of perceptions of gender inequalities in their associations with social identification with women and with feminists and women's collective action intentions, taking into account the role of legitimacy perceptions. Across two correlational and one experimental study, run in Italy, Turkey, and the UK, respectively, we found robust support for a rejection-identification hypothesis (Branscombe et al., 1999) on women's social identification with feminists, so that – in general terms – the more women perceived gender inequalities the more they identified with feminists. This was not the case for social identification with women, which was largely independent of women's perceived gender inequalities. Furthermore, we also found that the more women perceived

gender inequalities, the stronger their intentions to support social change through collective (Chapter 3) and private action (Chapter 4).

Second, **Section C** aimed to test whether and how perceiving gender inequalities was associated with women's career aspirations, also considering the role of their contingencies of self-worth. To do so, we run two correlational studies among women university students in Italy and Spain. In general terms, we found that when women perceived more inequalities, the higher their career aspirations, both in terms of leadership and achievement as well as educational aspirations. Extending relative deprivation theory (Smith et al., 2012), which posits that people are motivated to contest the status quo when they feel that they are being treated unjustly, these findings suggest that one of the ways that women may respond to gender inequalities is by investing more in their careers. Furthermore, this positive effect was not only found for women's career aspirations for the future but also for the perceived academic effort that participants reported to invest in their studies, further corroborating the idea that studying and nurturing higher career aspirations may be a way through which women challenge their disadvantaged position in light of supporting social change.

Last, **Section D** inquired into the relationship between perceived gender inequalities and women's attitudes toward other disadvantaged groups, considering the key role of the emotional expression stemming from appraising inequality and perceived friends' norms about supporting gender equality. To this aim, we ran one correlational study among women in Italy who were asked about their attitudes towards trans women, gays and lesbians, and migrants. Findings showed that higher perceptions of gender inequalities, particularly of social expectations, were related to more favorable attitudes towards sexual and gender minorities, but not towards migrants. Building on intra-minority solidarity research (Craig et al., 2012) this study suggests that perceiving that one's group is disadvantaged across several domains may make it easier to empathize with other minority groups, whose discrimination

experiences also unfold around similar domains, but do not extend to groups that are perceived more distant, possibly with a different experience of victimization.

Four main dimensions of gender inequalities

One of the most innovative contributions of the present work is the robust evidence that we gathered for the four-factor structure of perceived gender inequalities, which include workplace inequalities, harassment towards women, social expectations, and domestic imbalance. Remarkably, this conceptualization proved useful in assessing perceived gender inequalities in four very different contexts, namely Italy, the UK, Turkey, and Spain, which are, respectively, the 79th, the 15th, the 129th, and the 18th countries on Global Gender Gap Index (World Economic Forum, 2023). This indicates that, even in countries that are characterized by different levels of gender inequalities and different levels of public attention to gender issues, women's perceptions of gender inequalities affecting women can be organized around these main dimensions. Yet, this is not to say that each dimension of gender inequalities brings about the same effects in all contexts. In fact, as we reported in the following overview of the outcomes associated with each of them, while general patterns have been robust across studies, we found variations in the specific dimensions of inequalities that were associated with certain psychological outcomes.

Workplace Inequalities

When it comes to career prospects and opportunities, the playing field is not equal for all groups. Women are subject to stricter selection criteria when entering the workplace (Moscatelli et al., 2020), are less likely to be considered for stable leadership positions (Ryan et al., 2016), and are more likely to be fired in case of crises, such as the Covid-19 pandemic (Fisher & Ryan, 2021).

When considering all four dimensions of perceived gender inequalities, we found that women's perceptions of workplace inequalities were uniquely associated with the emotional expression of anger and disdain, reported experience of sexism, support for affirmative action policies in Italy, and hostility toward men in the UK (Chapter 2), social identification with feminists and intentions to support collective action in Italy and Turkey (Chapter 3), negatively associated with intentions to do private action in support of gender equality in our experimental study in the UK (Chapter 4), with educational aspirations in Italy and centrality of academic competence in Italy and Spain (Chapter 5), indignation and more positive attitudes towards gays and lesbians and trans women in Italy (Chapter 6). Overall, being aware of workplace gender inequalities motivated women to challenge the status quo in different ways, from supporting policies that aim to tackle such heinous phenomena to investing more in their careers, and being supportive of other minorities that also face the burden of a patriarchal society that favors cisgender men.

Harassment toward women

While harassment is globally pervasive and impacts individuals of various gender identities, women constitute the large majority of victims (WHO, 2021). In this research, we have defined harassment as encompassing not only physical violence, but also sexual violence and psychological abuse, an array of intimidating behaviors such as insults, manipulation, and intimidation with the ultimate goal of reducing someone's freedom (Jordan et al., 2010). As Galdi and Guizzo (2021) argued, if we aim to reduce the more drastic consequences of gender violence, we need to pay significant attention to all more subtle and sometimes justified forms of harassment that occur.

In this work, when considering all four dimensions of perceived gender inequalities, we found that perceiving harassment toward women was uniquely associated with disdain in Italy, anger and disdain in the UK (Chapter 2), social identification with feminists in Italy

(Chapter 3), academic competence and educational aspirations in Italy and leadership, achievement and educational aspirations in Spain (Chapter 5) and attitudes towards gays and lesbians and trans women (Chapter 6). Overall, being aware of harassment towards women seems to fuel important reactions that can be understood as support for social change: from identifying with movements that, among other goals, aim to fight violence against women to express solidarity towards other potential victims. Not by chance, over the last decade one of the largest feminist movements with worldwide impact has been the #MeToo movement, highlighting and addressing issues of sexual harassment and assault, with individuals, predominantly women, sharing their personal experiences (Corbett, 2022; Menegatti et al., 2022).

Social Expectations

According to the expected sex assigned at birth, parents tailor their preparations differently, exemplified by gender reveal parties and subsequent practices like using pink hair bands for female and blue for male babies (Boylan, 2018). Through behaviors like these, people "make" gender, and not only signal the expected gender of the baby, but also convey the idea that according to their gender people will expect different things from them (Ellemers, 2018; Lorber, 2018). Games, media, education all reinforce the idea that women are completely different from men (Ellemers, 2018; Farrell et al., 2023; Valtorta et al., 2023), and therefore women face unique social expectations, including having to prioritize their appearance (Ramati-Ziber et al., 2020), motherhood (Ashburn-Nardo, 2017), or have less interest in sexual activities (Conley et al., 2013).

We found that, after accounting for the other dimensions of gender inequalities, perceived social expectations were uniquely positively associated with favorable attitudes towards women's sexual freedom in Italy, disdain and resignation in the UK (Chapter 2), social identification with feminists in Turkey (Chapter 3), academic competence and

leadership and achievement aspirations in Italy (Chapter 5), and positively related to attitudes towards gays, lesbians and trans women (Chapter 6). Similarly to workplace inequalities and harassment toward women, one may argue that awareness of gendered social expectations too was beneficial for women's support for equality, as it was associated with an array of outcomes that can facilitate social change.

Domestic Imbalance

A legacy of a time when women did not work, the aspect of gender inequalities in the domestic sphere is still very resistant to change. Even in countries that are more gender equal in terms of workplace opportunities, women are still largely in charge of most household and care responsibilities (World Economic Forum, 2023). While undoubtedly constituting a central aspect of gender inequalities, a gendered division of household chores is so internalized that sometimes it is not considered unfair at all, even by women themselves (Cerrato & Cifre, 2018).

We found that, after accounting for the other dimensions of gender inequalities, perceived domestic imbalance was uniquely negatively associated with reported experience of sexism in Italy, and the emotion of resignation and hostility toward men in the UK (Chapter 2), was negatively associated with social identification with feminists in Turkey (Chapter 3), related to more support for collective and private action, and positively associated with social identification with feminists in the experimental study in the UK (Chapter 4), associated with centrality of competition and leadership and achievement aspiration in Italy, and with centrality of competition in Spain (Chapter 5). Specifically, Chapters 2 (where higher perceptions of domestic imbalance was related to less recognition of sexism and more resignation) and 3 (where perceiving more domestic inequality was unrelated perceived illegitimacy of those inequality and, in one of the studies, even negatively related to identification with feminists) seem to indicate that, differently from

other components (es. workplace inequalities), women may see disparities between men and women in the domestic domain without necessarily perceiving such disparity as related to gender inequalities.

From this brief overview of the findings about domestic imbalance which depict a picture with mixed findings, it appears already clear that understanding the impact of perceived gender inequalities in the household is more complex, and it is notable that this aspect showed the biggest variations across contexts and studies. Being a more private aspect of gender inequalities that may be not often discussed publicly and one where, compared to structural inequalities in the workplace or the phenomenon of harassment, women could more easily intervene by ensuring more gender-equal division of labor within their household, the main questions pertain to which women are more likely to perceive domestic inequality and how they think about it. Is it the women who, themselves, are responsible for more domestic duties? And do they think that it is unfair for women to be responsible for most household responsibilities? While for university students in Chapter 5 we found that perceiving domestic imbalance, maybe in their family of origin, motivated them to nurture higher career expectations, the other findings gathered with the same methodology (i.e., asking women, among other things, about whether or not they thought that women were largely responsible for domestic chores) depict a more negative picture, by which women who perceived domestic imbalance were less likely to report to have experienced sexism and less likely to identify with feminists, more likely to feel resigned and more hostile toward men, while we found no effects on the other outcomes investigated. The findings of Chapter 4 cannot be interpreted without recalling our manipulation, where we explicitly mentioned domestic imbalance as one of the aspects of gender inequalities, and it was in this case that – when we told participants that domestic inequality was still high – participants reported higher collective action intentions. All in all, differently from the other three aspects of perceived

gender inequalities that we analyzed, understanding whether and how perceiving domestic inequalities is beneficial to social change warrants further investigations.

General Theoretical Implications

This work brings several important theoretical implications. First, as already clarified, the newly proposed multidimensional conceptualization of gender inequalities affecting women represents an important step forward, moving beyond unidimensional (Tougas & Veilleux, 1988) or generalist approaches (Kinias & Kim, 2012). Second, in analyzing several different outcomes associated with perceived gender inequalities, this work expands our understanding of what psychological reactions can be triggered by perceiving gender inequalities. In particular, we investigated how perceiving gender inequalities was related to politicized identification and collective action intentions – that are the most well-studied outcomes in social change research (Agostini & van Zomeren, 2021; Simon & Klandermans, 2001), but also career aspirations and attitudes toward other minorities – which we argue is more indirect ways of supporting social change. Longitudinal evidence established that career aspirations are good predictors of occupational outcomes (Schoon & Parsons, 2002), and that being the case hints that when women nurture higher professional aspirations, they will be more likely to enter a professional or managerial career, which, in turn, will create more representation of women in domains where they are still underrepresented.

The motivational theory of role modeling (Morgenroth et al., 2015) explains that through shifting perceptions of what is attainable for role aspirants', inspiring aspirants towards a certain path, and showing how a certain path can be undertaken, aspirants can become motivated to follow a certain path. While certainly not enough to eliminate all barriers that prevent women from accessing and remaining on leadership and managerial tracks, creating more representation of women is then a factor that can surely contribute to a

more equal future for women, and hence we argue that nurturing higher professional aspirations can be seen as a way of supporting social change in the longer run.

As for why holding more favorable attitudes toward other disadvantaged groups can be an indirect way of supporting social change, we can use the lens of the political solidarity model of social change (Subašić et al., 2008). According to the model, social change can more successfully be attained when majority members – intended as members of groups that are not directly involved in a certain condition of relative disadvantage (e.g., gay men and sexism) – challenge those in a position of established authority in solidarity with the minority (e.g., women). Favorable attitudes towards other minority groups represent an important antecedent of such solidarity, which can give rise to coalitions (like in the case of the LGBTQIA+ community, a successful coalition of members of different disadvantaged groups who notably fight together for social change; Burson & Godfrey, 2020; Uysal et al., 2022). Accordingly, showing more positive attitudes towards gays and lesbians and trans women may represent the foundation for the creation of a "common-ingroup" identity (Dovidio et al., 2007), by which sexual and gender minorities get together to challenge the status quo, and hence we argue that can be considered a more indirect way of supporting social change. This interpretation is in light with the principles of "transfeminism", a branch of feminism that, by embracing the principles of intersectionality, recognizes the importance of fighting the patriarchy in the pursuit of the common goal of equality (Bunker, 2023).

Third, even though studies on gender issues have increased significantly over the last decades (Santoniccolo et al., 2023), women have been underrepresented within the relative deprivation tradition (Kelly & Breinlinger, 1995). By bringing together relative deprivation (Smith et al., 2012) and social identity theorizing (Turner & Reynolds, 2001), the rejection-identification development (Branscombe et al., 1999) and intra-minority solidarity research (Craig & Richeson, 2012), this work integrates different theoretical perspectives that provide

unique angles on the phenomenon of gender inequalities, and allows to frame solutions to the problem at the intersection of these multiple approaches.

Last, this dissertation shed unequivocally light on the importance of social context in shaping individuals' awareness and reactions to gender inequalities. Expecting identical outcomes from the same component irrespective of the analyzed context is not only naïve but also indicative of a culturally-blind approach, that the ethic approach to different cultures has sometimes taken in psychology (Helfrich, 1999). Through these findings, we propose a reflection on the validity of an emic approach, that not only allows for variations between findings in different contexts but reclaims its unique value in understanding the intricacies of how social contexts shape individuals' responses. In other words, the common threads across these studies are as important as the differences between the studies.

Practical Implications

The research findings yield tangible recommendations for addressing gender inequalities affecting women and advancing social change. First of all, the focus on the multidimensional nature of gender inequalities must be extended to all professionals dealing, broadly, with gender (in)equality, with the ultimate goal of better understanding and better dealing with this heinous phenomenon. While policymakers are already making use of multidimensional assessments, the understanding of the complex interplay between different facets of gender inequalities needs to be adopted by governments, educational institutions, organizations, psychologists, and educators too.

For instance, organizations implementing gender equality plans must recognize that eradicating the gender pay gap is just a starting point; interventions should extend to changing organizational cultures that may perpetuate inequality, even inadvertently. Are we doing enough to reduce harassment towards women, from the most visible expressions (e.g.,

workplace sexual harassment) to the most subtle (e.g., comments on the outfit of a woman during a meeting)? Does commuting to our offices come with the same barriers to women and men, and, if not, how can we intervene in making this space more accessible? Are we considering gendered social expectations when we hear mean comments about that woman colleague who decided not to have children? And, ultimately, how does the organizational structure actively aim to create awareness of and fight domestic imbalance? These are some of the main questions that organizations need to consider when aiming to tackle gender inequality. Whereas that of an organization is simply one example, similar questions should be asked whenever people actively want to promote gender equality, and that is valid across all domains: from advertisements to movies, from books to urban geography, etc.

Second, these findings – particularly those emerging from Chapter 3 relative to the links between perceived inequalities and legitimacy perceptions – underscore the importance of distinguishing between perceiving a difference (e.g., women spending more time on household chores) and labeling it as unjust. Awareness campaigns on gender inequalities should not only raise consciousness but also provide analytical tools to understand how gender differences contribute to sustaining a disadvantageous system. This is particularly relevant for educational programs that aim to bring attention to gender inequality in school settings. Such programs should be composed of several modules, including multiple domains where inequality exists, and, after providing the right analytical tools, facilitate debates and exchanges of ideas over the role that gender stereotypes cover in justifying inequality.

Third, the results emphasize the pivotal role of community, defined as a group sharing congruent values, in driving reactions to inequalities toward social change. In particular, in Chapters 3 and 4, this emerged more directly from the assessment of women's identification with feminists, but it also emerged in Chapter 6 where perceived friends' norms toward supporting equality were positively associated with more positive attitudes towards other

minorities. Having the opportunity to feel belonging to a group promoting values of equality constitutes a fundamental path toward further support for change, and hence it is important for interventions not to be directed at single individuals, but at groups of people. Whenever possible, interventions should dedicate a space for the formation of such communities to be formed.

Last, a general point pertains to the recommendation to implement evidence-based interventions that consider the general context where the intervention takes place (i.e., political situation, enforcement of gender norms,…), to target a specific group (i.e., women who live with their partner, women in university,…) and have a clear understanding of the intervention-objective, to know what dimensions of gender inequalities should be tackled through the intervention. For instance, if a campaign aims to create a coalition of women and sexual minorities, it may be more fruitful to focus on social expectations that women face, as opposed to raising awareness of domestic imbalance. Differently, when the aim is to facilitate participation in collective action, it may be more fruitful to focus on workplace inequalities instead of social expectations. Although this approach may incur higher costs, it ensures more targeted and effective interventions aligned with the nuanced dynamics of gender inequalities.

Implications for Feminist Activism

A particular type of implications that arise from this work concern feminist activism. Although a feminist is nothing but a person who sees gender inequalities, perceives them as unjust, and wants to try and change the status quo, these studies – particularly those in Chapters 3 and 4 – corroborate previous findings that found some reluctance in taking on this social identification because of the social stigma that comes from being associated with feminists (Radke et al., 2016). Hence, it comes with little surprise that many women reject the label “feminist”, even when their values align with gender equality principles. At the

same time, social identification with a relevant group can be particularly beneficial for people, especially those in a disadvantaged position (Branscombe et al., 1999; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In this regard, our studies in Chapter 3 showed that while generally speaking when women perceived more gender inequalities they tended to identify more with feminists, different patterns emerged when people justified inequalities. In particular, it was for the women who justified the inequality more that perceiving inequality was associated with more feminist identification, while the exact amount of information about inequality did not make the same difference in those women who already perceived gender inequalities as unjust. This signifies two things. First, for those women who are further away from feminist movements and show high reluctance towards the movement, sharing information on gender inequalities without focusing too much on the ideological standpoint may be the best way to engage them in support of equality. In other words, not imposing considerations on whether or not a certain aspect of inequality is legitimate, and avoiding explicitly referring to feminism may avoid polarization, and facilitate the engagement of more traditional women. Second, when women already condemn gender inequalities, focusing on awareness of gender inequalities may not be the most strategic way forward. At this stage, it may indeed be more beneficial to strengthen group ties and reflect on the possible functions of stigma towards feminism, giving people a chance to reclaim this stigmatized identity. In other words, this work suggests that feminist campaigns should be more tailored to the characteristics of the people they aim to include, both in terms of their knowledge about gender inequalities and their beliefs about their legitimacy.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current dissertation is not free of some limitations. We reported the main limitations that could be addressed in future research to provide an even stronger and more nuanced understanding of the phenomenon of gender inequalities. Firstly, except for Study 8

(Chapter 4) which employed an experimental design, our findings, although robust, relied exclusively on correlational data, which impedes drawing causal information about the associations we uncovered and accounting for the stability and change patterns of perceived gender inequalities. By adopting a longitudinal design, future research could examine how changes in perceived gender inequalities impact the analyzed outcomes. In particular, it would prove extremely valuable to assess such relationships among university students before and after their entrance into the job market, and among women in a romantic relationship with a man before and after living together. The first could shed light on the repercussions of facing possible negative outcomes in the workplace, while the second could help illuminate what lies behind the mixed findings we found for the correlates of perceived domestic imbalance.

Secondly, we relied solely on self-report measures, which are prone to positivity bias, particularly in intergroup phenomena (Domen et al., 2022). In future studies, it is crucial to recognize individuals' tendencies to adapt self-report measures, such as denying the impact of an issue, either to cope with negative situations or to present themselves positively (Blascovich et al., 2002). For instance, to gain a more objective understanding of individuals' responses to gender inequality, future research could incorporate physiological measures by adopting the lens of the biopsychosocial model of challenge and threat (Seery, 2013), which distinguishes between two motivational states: the challenge state occurs when individuals perceive they have sufficient resources to handle the demands of a specific situation, while the threat state arises when individuals believe the demands exceed their available resources. By integrating our methodology with a challenge and threat approach, experimental designs could expose women to a condition of high gender inequalities and one of low gender inequalities, and hence capture a comprehensive understanding of both conscious and unconscious responses to specific dimensions of perceived gender inequalities. Similarly, it

would also prove more informative to extend our investigation beyond intentions and examine concrete behaviors (e.g. involvement in a feminist movement).

Thirdly, while a social identification explanation was advanced to explain several of our findings (e.g., a possible confound of the studies on professional aspirations in Chapter 5 and common ingroup identity in the intra-minority solidarity study reported in Chapter 6) we directly measured social identification with women and feminists only in Chapters 3 and 4. To better understand some of the underlying processes behind the association between perceived inequalities and career aspirations and attitudes towards other minorities, it would be valuable to more explicitly investigate social identification with feminists and with other groups that may bring about these favorable outcomes (for instance, it could be investigated the extent to which people identify with "human rights activists").

Fourthly, we have used the adjective "foundational" to describe our approach several times throughout this dissertation, in light of justifying an approach that, while shedding nuances on the types of inequalities, has simplified the look on the target group. Yet, while some simplification was necessary in laying the groundwork, a binary approach to social inequality proves insufficient to fully grasp the phenomenon. To comprehensively address inequality, integrating these findings within an intersectional approach is crucial for uncovering novel aspects arising from multiple social identities (e.g., Mitha et al., 2021; Williams et al., 2020). Future research should explore the experiences of individuals with multiple stigmatized social identities, like women from minority groups (e.g., sexual, or ethnic minorities).

Related to this last point, there are many directions that the current work could, and should, lead to. First and foremost, having now established what are the main dimensions around which women's perceptions of gender inequalities unfold, it is fundamental to

investigate how other gender groups, and particularly men, who hold the most advantaged stand, perceive, and react to these inequalities. For instance, previous research found that when men perceive that women are disadvantaged in the workplace, they are more likely to engage in collective action for equality (e.g., Mazzuca et al., 2022), would similar effects be found for the other dimensions of gender inequalities or would these relate to different psychological reactions? Perceiving inequality does not automatically lead to supporting social change, as partly emerged even in this research with regards to the domain of domestic imbalance, and it is fundamental to research strategies that can help policymakers, organizations, and educators in making people aware of everyone's social responsibility in eliminating gender inequality.

Additionally, as we defined gender inequalities as "all the different situations in which people are treated differently or have access to different resources only based on their gender" (p. 11), it ensures that women are not the only gender group facing significant inequalities. Non-binary and transgender individuals experience even higher levels of discrimination among multiple domains: from workplace inequalities (Davidson, 2016) and mental health (Scandurra et al., 2021) to family rejection (Veale et al., 2022) to identity denial (Morgenroth et al., 2023). Even men, despite representing the most privileged group, face pressure because of their gender which has detrimental effects (e.g., Bosson et al., 2021). Hence, research examining how we can motivate people to support gender equality would benefit from the integration of all gender groups, to place the discourse on a more naturalistic perspective by which gender equality is a collective achievement beneficial to all groups in society.

Furthermore, because we have investigated the beneficial effects of perceiving gender inequalities on women's support for social change, it would complement our understanding if future studies were to explore the effects that perceiving gender inequalities has on women's

health, and whether and how identifying with feminists play a role. Research has indeed acknowledged that sustained support for change through collective action takes a toll on people's health through emotional exhaustion (Cohen-Eick et al., 2023). Interestingly, while participating in sustained collective action can lead to activist burnout, thus hampering social change, recent developments have also highlighted the role of "perceived emotional fit" in buffering against this negative effect (Vandermeulen et al., 2023). Through the lens of the social identity approach (Turner & Reynolds, 2001), it would be relevant to address the role of identification with feminists in mitigating the negative effects of prolonged support for social change.

Positionality and Generalizability Statements

The author of this dissertation is a 27-year-old gay cisgender man. Born and raised in a Catholic family in a rural village of about 40 inhabitants, he has had plenty of opportunities to experience, witness, and reflect on structural inequalities against women and gender and sexual minorities. For most of his life, it was with the women around him that he built the necessary resilience to make his way in a deeply unequal society.

Being gay is no gateway to the understanding of all structural inequalities, especially as a man (i.e., the amount of privilege of a white cis-gender man often disregards sexual orientation), and by no means this research project has represented an overdetermination of the male gaze on gender inequalities affecting women. An indispensable component in the carrying out of this research project has been the careful supervision of three excellent supervisors and women, professors Silvia Moscatelli, Monica Rubini, and Jolanda Jetten (who has technically been a host-supervisor in his 8-month research stay at the University of Queensland, but is one of the most impactful mentors ever met nonetheless) as well as all the precious collaborators that we had the privilege to work with for completing this research.

Fundamental have also been the many conversations had with other transfeminist scholars around the globe.

With respect to the generalizability of these studies, these eleven studies were conducted with samples of women and some non-binary people socialized as women in different countries, namely Italy, the UK, Turkey, and Spain. They were all older than 18 years old. All participants used some forms of ICTs (Information and communications technology, such as mobile phones, computers, or tablets) and could make use of an internet connection to participate in our research. While there are no expectations for the study to represent the general population of women in these countries, all studies were well-powered to draw robust conclusions regarding our research questions and we believe that results will be reproducible with adults from comparable participants pools. Yet, it would be extremely important to run similar studies in more non-WEIRD samples, outside of Turkey, as this was the only non-WEIRD country in which we had the resources to run a study.

Conclusion

The story of Medusa has been handed down in myths, written down in epics and poems, and told through paintings and images throughout the ages, but never by herself. It was our duty to look at history *through Medusa's gaze*. Yet, despite the primary focus on women in this dissertation to understand perceptions, we emphasize the moral imperative to extend research and practice to other gender groups and enlarge the focus to hold everyone accountable. In this regard, how are *we* doing in terms of achieving gender equality? Simply not good enough.

According to recent reports from UN Women, it will take 286 more years to achieve global gender equality (UN Women, 2022), while the World Economic Forum estimates another 132 years to close the global gender gap (World Economic Forum, 2022). Regardless

of which projection is more accurate, the undeniable reality is that progress is unacceptably slow for an issue long overdue. While these projections consider various indicators of gender inequalities, lay discussions on the topic often center on workplace disparities, or at most the acknowledgment of harassment against women. However, gender inequalities encompass much more.

Relevant to this point, a few months before this dissertation was written, Italy was shocked by the murder of Giulia Cecchetin, the 105th victim of feminicide in 2023 in the country (Bettiza, 2023). In a powerful interview, Giulia's sister, Elena Cecchetin, argued that feminicides represent the visible tip of a patriarchal iceberg, rooted in a complex interplay of gender inequalities for which we all bear responsibility. This insightful statement faced significant backlash, underscoring societal resistance to embracing the complexity of gender inequalities within inherently patriarchal systems (Manca, 2023; Padovaoggi, 2023).

Nevertheless, this dissertation brings unequivocal support to her perspective. Our findings indicate that gender inequalities unfold across diverse dimensions, encompassing workplace disparities, harassment toward women, domestic imbalances, and gendered social expectations. Moreover, it reveals that awareness of gender inequalities across these domains significantly fuels social change, influencing identification with social movements, collective action intentions, heightened career expectations, and solidarity with other minority groups facing structural inequalities. Establishing foundational evidence on the nature of gender inequalities and their impact on women, this work places particular emphasis on the pivotal role of awareness. It is equally important that people, especially those seemingly untouched by the phenomenon, are equipped with the necessary tools to understand and respond to gender inequalities effectively.

Social psychologists proved this: gender inequalities result from the systems we have implemented throughout history, and we all hold responsibilities for them. Therefore, we need to act more effectively, and do more than develop interventions aimed at “fixing women” (Ryan, 2023). That is, while interventions promoting gender inequalities by providing women with more skills, more knowledge, and more empowerment can have some benefits, this approach simply won’t suffice. It is our unequal systems that need changing, not women. And it is our shared responsibility to do our part.

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